AN ANSWER TO Several Material Passages IN A BOOK,

Published some time since by *W. P.*

ENTITULED,

A Brief Examination and State of Liberty Spiritual, both with respect to Persons in their private Capacity, and in their Church-Society and Communion, &c.

By *J. H.*

London, Printed in the Year, 1691.

A

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THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

FRIENDS,

YOU being esteemed such as profess the Spirit of Truth, the guide into all Truth, having met with this Book, Entituled, A brief Examination and state of Liberty spiritual, both with respect to Persons in their private Capacity, and in their Church Society and Communion; and finding the Author tells us, his aim was to assert Truth, detect Error, and point at some Shoals and Sands, that some have too boldly run upon, &c. Noting the great difference among Friends, touching the latter, we could do no less than give it a serious Perusal, in which we found, instead of asserting the Truth freely, detecting Error fairly, or pointing at any dangerous Sand or Shoal certainly; the tendency of our Author's Discourse, was rather to remove those true Marks we had, then otherwise; by endeavouring to bring in a Blind Obedience, and an Implicit Faith, to what he calls the Church, (which seems rather implied too, than fairly set forth that we can find.)

On this account, considering how easie 'tis for many on a Religious score, to take things for granted from Persons valued on that account, rather than give themselves the trouble of tryal, by a true search, according to the due weight of the Matter.

We say, considering the danger of this, we could do no less than take notice of several parts of the said Book, desiring they may be well weighed and considered, by such as believe the Spirit of Truth, is that only guide into all Truth. How far we was obliged to do this at present, by an immediate Motion from God, we shall not now determine, nor Impose upon any; for as we find the name of the Lord in this case is almost become as a Reproach, being so often used of late to so little purpose, so we would not administer further Occasion in that respect, to those that are without, to speak evil of the way of Truth, because of some difference among such as profess it; nor would we peremptorily impose upon our Brethren, who professing the same Principles of Truth, may pretend to the like Certainty; for avoiding those things, we chuse rather to commend what we have to say, to the witness of God in every mind, that being the likeliest way to make room for Truth; and as soft words are said to pacifie Wrath, so are they most like to be heard at this time.

'Tis true, we have delivered our Judgment plainly, that the Tendency and Import of our Author's Discourse was, and is to bring in blind Obedience, &c. which as it leads from the Truth, so it is wrong in it self; and as every wrong is managed knowingly, or otherwise thro' some mistake; if wrong is carried on *knowingly, 'tis evil or wicked, because designed; but from this censure, we may in Charity excuse our Author, believing him both a better Man, and more a Christian; but if not designed, it must be carried on and managed through some mistake, and so we would have what is said in the following Discourse to be understood.*

But then some may inquire, how our Author could be mistaken, being Master of such great Abilities? to which we answer, easily, through the mysterious working of the Enemy in the likeness of Truth; nor need this seem strange to any, if they consider how many have been deceived thereby, both great and small, and some at times hurried into things grosly evil, as killing their fellow Creatures; and yet at the same time, think they did God Service, &c. How much more easie is it for Persons to be deceived by the Enemy, in things that appear like good? The likeness of good and of Truth, is that which the evil one takes up, to keep his place, and save his Life, when he can keep no longer in the polluted State; for being a Spirit, he can turn into any likeness, and through the over-valuing of outward things

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on a Religious score, has the Enemy slipped undiscovered into all Forms of Religion, that have been in the World, and thereby kept alive his Kingdom, in the Wrath, Enmity, hard Speeches, Hatred, and Uncharitableness, that have been kept up among the various Professors of it.

Therefore, that great Mystery of Iniquity stands in the likeness of Truth; for if there was nothing like Truth, that is not Truth, there could be no Uncharitableness among such, as in any measure fear God; for as then there would be nothing but good and Evil, so such as loved the Good, as they would deny the Evil, they would own the good to the least degree of its appearance, knowing that as the Root of all Evil, was but one, so the Root of all good, was but one.

But now besides what is evil and good, as coming from each respective Root, there is a third thing, as we may say, that stands betwixt them. The outward appearance resembles good to a great degree, but the Root is of the same Nature with the Evil, having only changed his appearance; and though good may sometimes be witnessed here, as there is any thing of Sincerity in the Mind, yet the Root of Evil not being removed away, the covering of the Soul in the best sense, is but as the linnen and woolen Garment, forbid to be worn under the Law: On this account, it is as needful to know the Enemy cast out of our Hearts, as he appears like good, as it was to know him cast out, as he appeared as Evil; for as where the latter is not known, there wants the form of Truth; so where the former is not witnessed, there wants the power of it. It is here that he deceives poor Man, sitting as God in the Temple of God; *and therefore, till he is cast out, we cannot know our Names truly to be written in the* Lamb's Book of Life. *In this is the Victory, not only over* Sin, *but over* Satan; *for when he can keep no longer in the polluted State, nor deceive by the likeness of good, then can he deceive no more.*

This we must hope and look for, and the Turnings and overturnings in Profession of Religion, since the stirring of God by his Spirit to Reformation, do shew that he is on his way to reign, whose Right it is. But to our Time this Likeness of Truth, this Enemy, as God sitting in the Temple of God, &c. hath not been cast out, nor could in any Reformation, because all-a-long some outward Ceremoniel or shadowy things

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was joyned with the Spirit of Truth, as essential to Salvation. True Religion, and the Government of Christ: But as the Enemy can go into any outward Form or Thing, therefore he could not be cast forth whilst those outward Things were overvalued; but whether such have acted against Understanding, or the Day was not so far dawned upon them, we shall not here determine, because our Business is to consider what the Lord has done for us; hath he not given us to believe that God's Holy Spirit is the only Guide into all Truth, the Substance of all Types and Figures, and the fulfiller of every addition for Righteousness-sake, truely reconciling to God? But if after we have seen or believed the Lord is that Spirit, the Heir of all things that is Good and Serviceable for mans Souls Good, that was either in the Law, Prophets, or in any External Order, Form, Rule or Shadowy thing; if after we have believed all this we set up Ceremonial Circumstantial or Shadowy Things, as Terms of Communion and Essential to the Government of Christ, then we err on one Hand as they did on the other; they seemed to come short, in not believing the thing to be done on this side the Grave, &c. And we err and come short in concluding the Work is done before it is, which is a false Rest, for as we have more Additions than we had in our Beginning, and as every adding of outward Rules shews a Want of Christ's Government by his Holy Spirit; therefore, in the best Sense, if these Rules are added to perfect, and not only as an Expedient for the present Want, and so only to be used till Christ come in Power, to govern the Soul; instead of helping they will certainly hinder.

For as there is no Rule that hath been, is, or ever shall be, to perfect the Soul, by bringing it to God, but the Holy Spirit; so it is certain there is no Government in this Case but that of Christ, but it shall have an End. From hence it is certain that no outward Rule, as it concerns a Holy Conversation or the Worship of God is of any Service, but until he come: therefore outward Rules, as above are set up, by us as a standing Ordinance or but for a Time: If but for a Time, then their Service is but to steddy our Mind, that so in the Use of them we might daily wait for their fulfilling, by the coming of Christ, by his Holy Spirit: But if Rules, as above, are made as a standing Ordinance, then are these outward things over-valued, and whilst overvalued we cannot know Christ the Emanuel *come to fulfil them.*

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On this account it is that every latter Appearance of God is as Death to the former, and this is our Case, as well as any that did go before us, for the Substance of those two great Dispensations of Law and Gospel must be known in every Man that comes truly through the Work of Regeneration into the Kingdom of God, and therefore as the Natural Life is hard to be parted with, where a better is not hoped for, so where the Life of Religion stands in outward Things or Rules they are hard to be parted with while a better Life and Rule is not hoped for. Can any Man serve two Masters, which in our case we desire may be truly considered; and for that end we offer, as the Object of the Mind is, so is the Mind, whether it regard Conversation or the Worship of God, for if the Object of the Mind be an outward Rule the Mind can go no further than that Rule, for can any thing give forth more than it hath in it self? therefore by outward Rules Man can go no further than a Legal Dispensation; and if Man takes up his Rest here, his Dependance is no higher than a Covenant of Works, and such cannot know self-slain, and as such can never know boasting excluded, they cannot know Salvation truly, by the free Grace of God: But if the Object of the Mind be God's Holy Spirit, and truly follows it, the Mind thereby will become wholly Spiritual, wherein the old Things pass away and all becomes new, both as to outward things and also to heavenly things: Here the Tree is made Good, and its Fruit Good; Now the Root being Holy the Conversation is Holy, for as is the Fountain so is the Stream, what was difficult before is now easie, and what seemed harsh before is now pleasant, for the Root of evil being cast out there remains nothing but Good: Here the Peace on Earth and good Will is known to all Mankind; we desire therefore that outward Things may not be over-valued, for therein stand the uncharitableness that is amongst all that fear God, for as the over-valuing outward things hinders from coming into Communion and Fellowship with God, so it hinders the true Knowledg of the stirings of God in others, for when the Appearance or Conversation must be measured by certain Rules, it follows, what is Terms of Communion, or is accepted of God, may not be accepted of Men; we know where the Heart is purified, the Mind made Holy by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, this is terms of Communion, or what is accepted of God, from hence proceeds a Holy Conversation with a Confession to that Righteous Principle by which it is made such, and therefore as this is not accepted with Men, such are not born of God, nor do they know that Holy City, whose Gates stands open by Day, for there is no Night there, this lets all in that are Good, but hinders what is not: But

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all Cities but this, as they have Day and Night, ſo they know not what they do, but ſhut their Gates as ſoon againſt the Good as the contrary: That this great Evil may be avoided is all that is intended by what is here written, and that as we began in the Spirit ſo we may unto be perfected thereby, that ſo as we have in any meaſure known him to have been our Alpha, *we may know him to be our* Omega *alſo, for by no other way can the Deceiver be caſt out as he takes up the Profeſſion of the Truth.*

Where the Term You is found in the following Diſcourſe, we intend the Author and thoſe of his Mind, whoever they are, whether many or few.

And as the Term We is alſo uſed, it may be underſtood in reſpect to thoſe of the ſame Mind with the Author of this Boook.

There are ſeveral Faults committed by the Preſs, in Letters, Stops, *&c.* which the Reader is deſired to amend in the Reading; and in page 5. line 8. for *Author* read *Apoſtle.* And pag. 49. lin. 8. for *uncountable* read *unaccountable.*

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AN ANSWER to a BOOK, ENTITULED, *A Brief EXAMINATION*, &c.

AS to the Definition of Liberty ſpiritually explained, Page the firſt, we agree upon the matter.

But Page 2. after the asking of ſeveral Queſtions, the Author comes to this reſult, That there is ſome things left to our freedom, and bounds it at this time to outward things of Life and Commerce, as what I ſhall eat, and when, &c. And then ſtates this Queſtion.

But doth not freedom extend farther than this? For ſince God hath given me a manifeſtation of his Spirit to profit withall, and that I have the gift of God in my ſelf, ſhould I not be left to act according as I am free and perſwaded in my own mind in the things that relate to God, leaſt looking upon my ſelf as obliged by what is revealed unto another, though it be not revealed unto me, I ſhould be led out of my own meaſure, and act upon another motion, and offer a blind ſacrifice to God? To which he anſwers thus.

" *Anſw.* This is true in a ſenſe, that is, if thou art ſuch an one " that canſt do nothing againſt the Truth, but for the Truth, then " thou may'ſt ſafely be left to thy freedom in the things of God; " and the reaſon is plain, becauſe thy freedom ſtands in the per- " fect Law of Liberty, in the Law of the Spirit of Life in Chriſt " Jeſus, and in the Truth which is Chriſt Jeſus, which makes thee " free indeed, that is, perfectly free from all that is bad, and per-

" fectly free to all that is holy, juſt, lovely, comly, and of good " report: But if thou plead thy freedom againſt ſuch things, yea, " obſtructeſt and ſlighteſt ſuch good, wholſom and requiſite things, " thy freedom is naught, dark, perverſe, and out of Truth, and " againſt the perfect Law of Love and Liberty.

Anſwer, That this queſtion above is weighty, is clear, for the whole controverſie ſeems included in it; for where the gift of God is received to profit withall, they have liberty and freedom to chuſe or refuſe things according as they are perſwaded, or they have not; and all this is included in the queſtion; whereupon according to truth, if his deſign had been to aſſert it, the Queſtion ought to have been effectually anſwered, and all the parts of it freely and fairly diſcuſſed, that Perſons might have known their true Liberty, with reſpect to *Church-communion* according to his Title Page: But on the contrary, in our Judgment, the Anſwer, if worthy of that name, is ſlight and evaſive, no way deſerving to be reputed or accepted as a true Anſwer to this weighty Queſtion.

For, Obſerve, the Queſtion is, Whether freedom and liberty do not extend further than outward things; that is, whether it do not reach to the things of God where the gift of God is received according to the Queſtion, which being ſet down above *Verbatim*, we allways refer to in this matter, both to avoid miſtake and repetition.

To this, obſerve we find no direct Anſwer, neither directly affirming or denying the Queſtion; what's there, 'tis true implies a grant, but not to the purpoſe; and it ſeems rather to take the Queſtion to be an Aſſertion than a Queſtion, in our Judgment; for it follows thus, that this Queſtion is true in a ſenſe, which to us is neither clear nor very proper, a Queſtion in ſome ſort being a matter undetermined till affirmed or denied: And thus at firſt we ſee the Queſtion is rather avoided than anſwered; for what cauſe we ſhall enquire afterward. And in the mean time, ſeeing his Anſwer takes the Queſtion to be an Aſſertion to humor it, we are content the Queſtion be affirmed and turned into a poſition, to ſee then if we can ſpeed any better. And it will follow thus, or to this effect:

That true liberty and freedom doth extend further than outward things, as *what I ſhall Eat, and when*, &c. for it reacheth to the things of God, to all that have received the gift of God to profit with-

withall; for such as they do adhere to it, have liberty and freedom in the fear of God, to chuse what they believe, and are perswaded is good, and to refuse, and let alone what they believe and are perswaded is not good; nor can they act upon another's motion, whilst they want a sense of it in their own mind, by the gift of God given them to profit withall, but offer a blind Sacrifice to God. Here we hope we have kept close to the true sense of the Question, if affirmed, however we are content to abide by the genuine sense of it according to Truth.

To this, observe he answers, this Assertion or Question is true in a sense, and that is, he saith, *If thou be such an one as is perfectly free to all good, and perfectly free from all evil, then thou may'st be safely left to thy freedom.* To find whether this Answer be full or nay to the Question, we offer, either this Question, if affirmed, is true in a larger sense than he has granted, or its but true in this sense.

If true in a larger sense, it follows, if his aim and design, as he says, was to assert the truth, he has missed his mark. *For to assert, the truth is so comprehensive a term, as to take in the direct Answer to this weighty Question.*

But if but true in this sense that he hath laid down, then it follows, because I am not arrived at this Perfection he speaks of, that is, to be perfectly free from all that is bad, and perfectly free to all that is good, as Above; though I may have received the gift of God for that end, and do adhere to it, and am travailing for it, yet I am not to be left to my freedom and liberty in the things of God, to act as I am perswaded. Now if I must not act as I am perswaded, then I must act as others are perswaded; and how I can so act and not offer a blind Sacrifice to God, he hath not so much as attempted to shew which, discovers his Answer deficient, if his design was good.

Again, either he believes his Answer is full to the Question, or he believes and knows it is not: If he believes and knows it is not full, then must he not only, not have asserted the Truth as above, but also be conscious wherefore he did it not; and we conceive, that must either be because he wanted Ability, or otherwise, because he wanted Truth in his way, which we shall examin by and by.

And in the mean time, if he believed this was a full anſwer to the queſtion, when affirmed, then we muſt aſſert, he was under a great miſtake; for the Queſtion affirmed as above, is certainly not only true in a part, or in a ſenſe, as he is pleaſed to ſay; but it is true in every part, true in the whole, and every ſenſe that a Poſition can be true in; nay itis ſo far true, that if it can be wrong at all, 'tis only in a ſenſe; and that is only when miſ-applied. But the Miſ-application of this weighty Queſtion when affirmed, doth (obſerve) neither deſtroy it in it ſelf, nor in the leaſt take away the true uſe; and therefore we believe, where the gift of God is received to profit withall, and truly adhered too, there muſt be a liberty to chuſe and refuſe things according as ſuch are perſwaded, even from the Babe in Chriſt, to the ſtrong Man, and ſo to all States: Nor do we hereby exclude External Counſel and Advice, but ſtill it muſt accord, and agree with the gift of God received, or 'tis not obliging. And where this is not freely granted, at leaſt among a People that acknowledge the Spirit of Truth to be the only guide into all Truth, there the Government of Chriſt is either directly or indirectly oppoſed or hindered; for admit of one Error or Uncertainty, and more will follow; an Uncertainty admitted for the Truth in this caſe, ſtanding in the nature of a Lie.

But now to ſhew, that this part of his Anſwer which ſeems to affirm the Queſtion, is ſo far from being a direct and full Anſwer, as 'tis not worthy of that name, being of no uſe or ſervice with reſpect to the Controverſie, the end for which he pleads his great concern to write. For obſerve, though 'tis true in the ſenſe he grants, that thoſe that are perfectly free from all bad, and perfectly free to all good, may ſafely be left to their freedom to act in the things of God as they are perſwaded. Yet, foraſmuch as he neither hath, nor we believe, can give us any certain or undoubted Rule, how to know who theſe are that are ſo to be left; all that he hath ſaid by way of affirming this great and weighty Queſtion, is worth nothing; for as it is altogether unintelligible, 'tis every way impracticable. *Well then*, if any certain Rule can be given to know who may be left to their freedom as above, let us have it, and by the contrary Rule, we ſhall know who may not be ſo left: But if no ſuch Rule can be given, it muſt follow, all muſt be left free, or none muſt be left. If none muſt be left, then muſt an

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outward Rule be ſet up to govern all, and that would make us like *Iſrael* that rejected God's Government, to be like other Nations. But if all muſt be left free to act in the things of God as they are perſwaded, let all this Clamour ceaſe, that we may be quiet and live like Chriſtians in the fellowſhip of the Goſpel. There is but one Objection, and that is, that this is to give liberty to evil, which we may ſpeak to in another place; and in the mean time, that is far from our thoughts, as the Author ſaid, it ought not to be named among Saints.

But now to the latter part of his Anſwer, where he makes a flouriſh, as if he would tell us who were not to be left to their freedom, that ſo he might give ſome thing like an Anſwer to the whole Queſtion; in which, if he ſucceeds no better than he has done above, we believe there is none will be better or wiſer, for what he has done. But to the matter, he tells us, if thou plead'ſt thy freedom againſt ſuch requiſite things, thy freedom is naught, dark, perverſe, and out of the Truth, *&c.* This is ſtill to the ſame tune; here is a Judge implied, but not ſet forth; 'tis not the Spirit of Truth, but ſome outward thing, whatever it is.

But ſince we know not where he will fix, to ſay no more, 'tis dark to be ſure: To help it all we can, we ſhall thus far grant, there are ſome outward things ſo far eſſential to true Religion, as thoſe that do contrary to them may be detected of Error; but if it had been any of thoſe things that had been done contrary too, we believe they would not have been omitted here, becauſe if certain, they would have greatly advantaged this Diſcourſe, there being much want of certainty in it: But this not being done, and things laid down in a general way, in which often deceit or cunning lurks, we can do no leſs than judge, that the things ſuggeſted as the ground of Difference, are neither ſuch Principles nor Practices as have been from our beginning, nor yet ſuch things as can be truly ſaid to be eſſential to true Religion; and if not eſſential things, (obſerve it) nor yet ſuch things as have been from our beginning, they can at beſt be but circumſtantial, or if you will, ceremonial or ſhadowy things, and ſuch things at beſt are but accidentally good, that is, as Perſons are perſwaded of them; and what is but accidentally good, may on the contrary, be accidentally not good, and that is as perſons are diſatisfied with them. And if they prove ſuch things as thoſe, we believe they concern only that outward Court which

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God hath left unmeaſured, on purpoſe that Chriſtians might never differ about them; and if ſuch things (as we are fit to take for granted) we would gladly know, how they can be brought in and made terms of Communion againſt the mind of other of the ſame perſwaſion, while we have run down with all our power the like in others? What, was they wrong there, and can they be right here (that's ſtrange) according to truth? But in the likeneſs of truth its not ſtrange, it being commonly found, that Perſons plead for or againſt things in others, which they will neither give nor take themſelves. Beſides it's ſeen, it's about ſuch things that the moſt of Chriſtians have differed, denying Communion to one another on ſome ſpecious pretence or other, forgetting to give what they themſelves deſired to receive. And thus hath poor Man been deceived all along by the Devil in the likeneſs of Truth.

But to proceed, that the Queſtion above is weighty, we have noted, and that the Anſwer is evaſive, and nothing to the purpoſe, we have ſhewed. The Reaſon wherefore it was evaded, remains to be inquired into according to our promiſe; and that we conceive ſtill as above, muſt either be becauſe our Author wanted Ability, or elſe his Cauſe was not good, and ſo could not bear the anſwering it according to truth.

Not the firſt we are ſatisfied, for thoſe many Tracts wrote by him, when directed to a good end, do abundantly ſhew his Ability, and skill in things of this kind, yea to that exactneſs, that without flattery, he might have been compared to the Men of *Benjamin* that could hit their Mark to an hairs breadth. Thus it could not be the want of Ability, therefore we are ſatisfied, it was the want of Truth in the deſign carried on; Opinion or the likeneſs of Truth, was endeavoured to be obtruded and ſet up inſtead of Truth; betwixt which and Truth, there is as much difference in the ground, nay, more than betwixt the ſhadow and the ſubſtance; and yet there is that likeneſs in outward appearance, or elſe it could not be called the *Myſtery of Iniquity*; by which all are and have been deceived, to their hurt, but only ſuch who are ſincere to God, and cannot ſit down before they know their Names writ in the *Lamb's Book of Life*. This is that only which can fully ſatisfie the *Hungry* and *the Thirſty Soul*.

So that though Men have begun well, yet if they travel not for

for the end, they muſt miſcarry; for if the Travel ceaſe in any ſtate ſhort of the Reſt, let former Openings and Experiences in what they will, as that work is ſtopped by the Enemy, ſo are they deceived by him in the likeneſs of the Truth at beſt; for as the Reſt is that which remains for the People of God, ſo is there no ſtate allotted men that have ſimply begun in Spirit to dwell in ſhort of that, becauſe none ſafe but that; the Reſt is only by being in Chriſt, the Travel is while he appears in us, to fit us for himſelf, to new create us; for 'tis the new Creature that only finds room in him.

Now the Enemy, that fallen Angel, can go with Man into every remove, whilſt man is fitting and preparing, but into Chriſt he cannot come; for in him he has no part; upon which account 'tis plain, the difference is great betwixt our being in Chriſt, and he only in us. And as man muſt be made a new Creature before he can come into Chriſt, ſo muſt he travel through the whole Myſtery of Iniquity; and in the laſt ſtep of the Travel, is the very height of the Myſtery known, and not before. Here is the delivering of *Iſaac* up indeed, and the receiving of him again after another ſort: Here the Myſtery is finiſhed, and Man's works ceaſeth, *&c.* We know whilſt the Hunger and Thirſt remains for God's Kingdom in Man's Mind and Soul, he cannot chuſe but be ſincere, and then he muſt travel, becauſe the Hope ſtands before him, and the ſenſe of Eternal Life lives upon his Mind; but if the value of that Heavenly Country fall in his Mind, the Travel ceaſes; and then, if in any ſtate ſhort of the Reſt, 'tis not God nor his Holy Spirit that bears Rule; for where he rules, there is Sincerity, and where there is Sincerity, there's travel. And as the Lord begets it, ſo he has regard to the leaſt meaſure of his own begeting, and there the Enemy is chained, and the Sin of the leaſt Child is forgiven for his Name ſake; ſo that though the Enemy can go with the Creature, he rules not; but if the Travel of the Mind and Soul ceaſe before the Reſt is known, let it be where it will, as the Sincerity ceaſes, it is the Enemy that rules, and the more Knowledge revealed, the greater is the Myſtery of Iniquity; and when this comes to paſs as there is a falſe Reſt ſet up, ſo there is a great noiſe about outward things. All was quiet before, but now all in a Tumult, not about eſſential, but circumſtantial or ſhadowy things. It would not be ſo, if we truly ſought the Heavenly Country,

Country, or rightly knew our Lives hid with Christ in God; for if that was truly known, first, as to the Travel, we should find work enough at Home; and if the latter, wherein our own Works ceaseth, we should never think of establishing God's Kingdom by our Works: But to leave this Digression, and come again to the Matter.

As the likeness of Truth, and Truth, differ in the Ground, so their Arguments do also differ. Those plain and simple Arguments that will serve the Truth, will do nothing for the other to help the likeness forward; weighty Questions must be evaded, or indeed agreeable to the Nature of the matter carried on; something like Answer must be given to weighty Questions, which in truth are none; things that God has left unmeasured, must be measured, and a greater value set upon them, than he ever set; and what ought to be proved, (that it might be certain, because where there wants Certainty there wants Truth) must instead of being proved, be taken for granted; which begging of the Question is apparent throughout the whole Discourse, as may be shewed in part as we proceed; by which 'tis plain to us, and we hope will be to every considerate Reader, that the plain tendency of the Paper, was, and is to bring in the likeness of Truth, for the Truth, by endeavouring a Conformity that's more presumptive than real, wherein things must be taken for granted, because others say it, and not because they that should receive them, know they are true; and that this Discourse levels at this Mark, is plain to us, and hopes will be to more, if they consider the go-by to this weighty Question. And this will be further confirmed, when we consider the Difficulties that lye in the Question, to be answered truly, where Mens ways is not that of the Truth.

To this end consider, the Question is fair and easily answered according to Truth; then as his aim was to have asserted Truth, he ought to have done it; but 'tis plain with respect to Truth and his Discourse, he could do it neither way, that is, he could neither directly affirm or deny the Question.

For first, had he affirmed the Question as he ought to have done, that is to have fairly granted, that where the gift of God is received to profit withall, there all such ought to be left to act in the things of God as they are perswaded, then had he spoyled his Discourse, for he could not deny but those that he would conclude to be guided

guided by others, have received the gift of God to profit withall; therefore as this would have been inconsistent with his Discourse, 'tis plain, his way was not the way of Truth. Again, had he granted the Question as above, he had not only spoyled his Discourse by asserting Truth, but then he had asserted and stood by one of the Foundations, Principles of our building, and of every true building, to wit, Conviction and Perswasion. And indeed without which, as there can be no true buillding, so can no true building stand where 'tis discontinued; this must needs have marred the Market of those whose cause he undertook, that cannot be quiet about their Opinions, till others of the same Communion are perswaded, which ought, and must be, if Conviction or Perswasion must preceed Conformity: By Opinions, we mean such things as have not been from our beginning, and which can never be proved essential things; for they may tell us, they are moved of God, in the matter, this will not do whilst we are sure that he hath left such things on purpose unmeasured, that Men might agree; therefore, where Persons will press such things to dissatisfaction, they raise themselves above the level of their Brethren, and then of necessity there must be something of Lordship and Dominion exercised, contrary to the Rule laid down by our Lord, who said, after those things the *Gentiles* seek, but said, it shall not be so among you; he that will be the greatest, let him be as him that serveth. On this account they was to call no Man Doctor or Father, that so their Dependence might not be on Men, let their Abilities be what they will. And thus, as his Discourse could not bear the affirming truly this weighty Question, because then must have granted Conviction; so on the other hand, he could not deny it; for had he done that, he must have been under an Obligation to have demonstrated, how there could be a dependance on others in the things of God, without offering a blind Sacrifice to God; but this he could not with respect to Truth, and the other he could not, with respect to his Discourse; and those we conclude the true Reasons why the Question was left unanswered.

There is one thing more worth our while to consider before we leave this matter, and that is, how it should come to pass that a Man of his Ability should state a Question that he could not answer, with respect to his design and end; had another set it, and he slipt it over, it had been the more tollerable; but for him to

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ſtate it himſelf, and give it the go-by ſo ſorrily, is plain weakneſs; to which, what can be ſaid, but when Men will imploy their Parts and Abilities to a wrong end, an end God never deſigned them to, there divine Providence ſuffers Men to ſhew their weakneſs, firſt, that no Fleſh ſhould glory in his Preſence; and ſecondly, that others ſeeing weakneſſes as in the beſt of Men, might be cautioned to wait to know their dependance upon him, that neither ſlumbereth nor ſleepeth, nor can be miſtaken, which is all that is deſired by what is writ. We have ſtood the longer upon this, in looking upon its weight.

He Queſtions Page the 3*d*. *But muſt I conform to things whether I can receive them or nay? Ought I not to be left to the Grace and Spirit of God in my own Heart?*

To this, he anſwers to the firſt part of the Queſtion, *Nay*; that is, *Thou ought not to receive things againſt Truth*; to the latter part, *Yea*; that is, *Thou ought to be left to the Grace and Spirit of God.*

Anſwer. This is fairly ſaid we muſt confeſs, and if truly ſtood to, might help to make amends for the former deficient Anſwer, but if otherwiſe, it will be a further Evidence his end is not good; and therefore to examin the matter, he ſaith, let us conſider what is the reaſon, that thou canſt not receive them, is the fault in the things, or is it in thee, *&c.* If in thee, thou ought to be dealt with; thus far he hath ſaid well; but now on the other Hand, what if the fault be in the things, or in the ground or manner of bringing them in? What Care has he taken? What Remedy has he provided, that ſuch things may be fairly and freely withſtood? Verily none at all, neither here, nor in any place of his Book that we can find; which certainly he ought to have done, if he had aſſerted equal Liberty according to his Diſcourſe, if it was to aſſert Truth; for he inquires fairly where the fault is, that is, whether in the things brought in, or in thoſe that cannot receive them; by which 'tis fairly implyed, if not granted, that the fault may lye on the ſide of the things brought in, as well as on the ſide of thoſe that cannot receive them, and doth lye there for any thing that he has ſaid, to prove the contrary; but if not determined, yet foraſmuch as moſt danger may lye on the ſide of the things, if they muſt come in without controul; for we may conclude, ſuch as bring them in are reputed Leaders; and foraſmuch

much as the Leaders may do more harm in bringing in things that are wrong, than others can do in oppoſing ſome things that may in ſome ſort be right. But as a way is granted to deal with thoſe that oppoſe what is right, there ought to be as much care for Liberty, to oppoſe what is wrong; but for that he has taken no care, though 'tis plain, the Danger is as great, nay, greater on that ſide; for the Leaders have cauſed the People to err, and the effect was, that the People led by them was devoured. The wiſe Man ſaid, *There was nothing new*; then the Leaders may again cauſe the People to err, and the People may again be devoured for any thing that he has ſaid, either to prove there is no Danger, or by aſſerting true Liberty to prevent it, which can never be better done, nor more according to Truth, than by allowing freely Conviction and Perſwaſion to preceed Conformity; for as this keeps down Men from being maſterly, ſo it helps ſuch as are to receive things, to conſider of true Religion in themſelves; and therefore, the contrary may be the ruin of the whole; on which account 'tis plain, he having taken no care as he hath not aſſerted the Truth, for that allows equal Liberty, ſo he appears partial.

Again in the ſame Page, he ſays, *It is a dangerous Principle, and pernicious to true Religion*; and which is worſe, he ſaith, *'Tis the root of Ranteriſm to aſſert, that nothing is a Duty incumbent upon thee, but what thou art perſwaded on*, &c.

Anſwer. This deſerves our Conſideration, for 'tis as removing a Bounder or Land-mark, 'tis of the ſame Nature with Conviction or Perſwaſion; for if Conviction and Perſwaſion is to preceed or go before Conformity in our Duty to God and true Religion, then nothing can be a Duty incumbent upon us, but what we are perſwaded on: But if Duty to God and true Religion muſt be performed before convinced or perſwaded to it, then ſomething may be a Duty incumbent upon us, that we know not, or are not perſwaded on.

We ſhall examine this a little, and therefore offer, if to aſſert or believe that nothing is a Duty incumbent upon us, but what we are perſwaded on, be in it ſelf a dangerous Principle, pernicious to true Religion, and what is ſtill worſe, the root of Ranteriſm, then the ſaying that ſtands againſt this, muſt be as good as that is evil; that is, it muſt be a ſafe Principle, propitious to true Religion; and which is ſtill better, it ſhould be as the root of

all good to Man; for we conceive, the root of Ranterism is as the root of all evil. Well, this saying that stands against the former, is to believe or assert, that something is a Duty incumbent upon us, that we know not, or are not perswaded on; for we must either believe, that nothing is a Duty incumbent upon us but what we are perswaded on, or we must believe the contrary.

Now, as opposite sayings have contrary senses and effects, then if the first saying be evil, the latter must be good; and on the contrary, if the latter in a direct and true sense be wrong, as leading from Truth into blind Obedience, then the former saying, notwithstanding all his ugly Epithites bestowed upon it, must be good in a true sense, as tending to lead truly to know, both our Duty toward God and true Religion.

And therefore observe, if according to his saying, to assert or believe that nothing is a Duty incumbent upon us, but what we are perswaded on, be the root of Ranterism worse than what is pernicious to true Religion: Then to avoid this dangerous Shoal and Sand that he has given notice of, we must believe, that something is a Duty incumbent upon us that we are not perswaded on; and if we can thus believe, we must of necessity depend on him or others, to let us know what our Duty is.

If this is his meaning, and what he aims at; and for our parts, we can see no other sense obvious on the Consequence of his Argument; we say, this must be back again to something, like the first Covenant that could not make the Commers thereunto perfect; but this is not so good; for that was measured of God, whilst this is not: This is to Impeach the Grace of God, and Spirit of Truth, to whose sufficiency so many Testimonies have been born, as not now sufficient to lead all (observe) into all Truth; 'tis true, it may imply, that some are led into all Truth, or else we know not on whom they must depend, that are to believe, that something is a Duty incumbent upon them that they are not perswaded on; but as this is his meaning, he has left us miserably unprovided, whilst the Consequence of his arguing is to make us believe, that something is a Duty incumbent upon us that we do not know, and yet at the same time doth not let us know on whom we may depend; but seeing our Inability to understand our Duty, must be the cause of our Dependance, on whom he or others is pleased to set forth; may not we say this bears for *Rome*, where Ignorance is said to be the Mother of Devotion? but that we

will

will not at preſent, becauſe perhaps his meaning may be better than his Expreſſion, and indeed it had been the eaſilier paſſed by, had he made any good Proviſion in his Book, that we might not have been impoſed on contrary to our Underſtandings; but taking no care for that that we can find, as alſo diſcouraging all thoſe Poſitions that ſeems to reſerve a Liberty to underſtand what we are to receive, demonſtrates plainly, the tendency of his writing is to bring in blind Obedience.

But to confirm his ugly dreſs put upon this ſaying, that nothing is a Duty incumbent upon us but what we are perſwaded on, he tells us, the dead, dark, and ſeared Conſciences plead Liberty againſt all Duty, and this is all that he offers that is material; but this will not do his buſineſs; for there is a vaſt difference betwixt denying all Duty to God, and believing nothing a Duty but what we are perſwaded on: The firſt deny all Duty, the latter owns all Duty that can be known.

The firſt denying all Duty is directly evil, but the latter, as they own all Duty that they know, ſo may they wait truly to know what God is pleaſed farther to ſhew, wherein a true Chriſtian is included and ſtands; and therefore, for him to joyn this ſtate which may be truly good, with that which is certainly evil, though he has not juſtified the wicked, yet certainly he has condemned the Righteous, concerning which, there is much might be ſpoken. But in ſhort, either he believes thoſe that believe or aſſert, that nothing is a Duty incumbent upon them, but what they are perſwaded on, are thoſe dead, dark, and ſeared Conſciences, or he doth not ſo believe; if he doth not ſo believe, why doth he compare them with ſuch? But if he doth ſo believe, then ſeeing according to his account, they muſt be dead, dark and ſeared, before they made thoſe Pleas; and then ſeeing there is nothing more contrary to the living than the dead, how came it they was not found out till thoſe Circumſtantial things was brought in? For ſo we muſt account them till they are proved otherwiſe. 'Tis true, he calls them requiſite things, and no marvel that you ſhould ſo eſteem them, when you could not know your dead, dark and ſeared Conſciences without them; but can thoſe requiſite things that keeps out, or makes known thoſe dead, dark and ſeared Conſciences that pleads, being left to the Grace of God, and that nothing is a Duty incumbent upon them, but what they are perſwaded

swaded on? Can those requisite things which keeps those above out, keep out Hypocrites? If not, must they not be living or dead Members? If living, we leave you modestly to make the Application; but if dead, 'tis worth your while to consider, if you have not been under some mistake all this time, and so have been endeavouring to cast out the living, but kept the dead; doth this bespeak you truly living, and your spiritual Senses perfect? To say no more to this we doubt not.

But again, to this Position, that nothing is a Duty but what we are perswaded on; if this saying be so evil as he has represented it, as above, then it must be so, either because of it's abuse, or because evil in it self. If it must be disused and criminated only because some abuse it, then what is there but it must be parted with; according to his own saying, Page 4. in a like Case, farewell with the Scripture, and indeed with every thing else that's good, since all those things that Man can meddle with, have been abused at one time or other.

But if he be so angry at this Position, as evil in it self, which it must, if the root of Ranterism, then we believe he is in a great mistake, and do offer in its favour, that what may be said by a Holy and Religious Man; truly as a Holy and Religious Man cannot be Evil, much less the root of Ranterism, but this, that nothing is a Duty, but what we are perswaded on, we believe may be truly affirmed by a Holy and Religious Man, and that against Imposition: For as no Man can be Holy but by God's Holy Spirit, so no Man can truly know his Duty towards God, but by the same Spirit; and as Duty to God cannot be known, nor true Religion performed, but by the Influences of it, so we believe where the gift of God is received to profit withall, and truly adhered too, nothing is a Duty incumbent upon such, but what they are perswaded on. We do not say, that nothing shall be a Duty but what such are perswaded on, but this we say, whatever shall be a Duty, must be known before it can be so. Now, if nothing be a Duty but what they are perswaded on, certainly they may affirm on a Christian account, nothing is a Duty incumbent upon them, but what they know or are perswaded on, without being Ranters, which they could not, if this saying was the root of Ranterism.

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But to obſerve a little what his own Words afford us, he tells us of ſome Perſons above, that was perfectly free from all bad, and perfectly free to all good, which might ſafely be left to their freedom to act in the things of God. Now, we hope however that he will grant, that nothing is a Duty incumbent upon them, but what they are perſwaded on; and then we hope he will allow, they may affirm nothing is a Duty but what they are perſwaded on, and if but true in that one ſenſe, this ſaying cannot be the root of Ranteriſm, for that is true or good in no ſenſe: 'Tis true, he has not given us a Rule to know thoſe of whom we laſt ſpake, nor do we believe that he can ſet them out; but that is not againſt us, but for us; for if any may aſſert, that nothing is a Duty but what they are perſwaded on, tho others may abuſe it, if we cannot diſtinguiſh betwixt the one and the other; he knows Tares muſt be ſuffered to grow, rather than run the hazard to deſtroy Wheat.

Again, he tells us Page 9. *That a ſaying may be true or falſe according to the ſubject or matter 'tis applied to.* Now, though we believe he has miſt the truth there, yet it will ſerve us here againſt himſelf; for this Poſition that he is ſo angry at, is but a ſaying, and ſuch as has been advanced truly againſt Impoſition, and again, may be truly uſed on that occaſion; therefore it cannot be the root of Ranteriſm, for that is ſimply evil; wherefore, we hope he will withdraw his Charge of the root of Ranteriſm from this Poſition, that nothing is a Duty incumbent upon us but what we are perſwaded on, and inſtead of condemning it as evil, allow it as good and neceſſary in its genuine ſenſe.

But to conclude this matter, we grant a ſaying may come from the root of Ranteriſm, but no ſaying whatever can be that Root, much leſs ſuch a ſaying that hath, and may again be applied to a good end; wherefore we cannot ſee why this ſaying ſhould be written with a different Character for, and this ugly and undeſerved dreſs put on it, except inſtead of perſwading, to affrighten into blind Obedience.

To the latter part of the Queſtion, *Ought I not to be left to the Grace and Spirit of God in my own Heart*, &c.

To this he anſwers, *That is of all things moſt deſirable, for no fear of want of Unity, where all are ſo left with the one Spirit, they muſt be of one Mind, they cannot be otherwiſe*, &c.

Anſwer,

Answer, That he desires all should be guided by God's Spirit, we believe, and therein does well; but that he should limit it to that one way, with respect to shadowy or circumstantial things, that he may believe is good, is his mistake; by which 'tis plain, though he may have received a measure of God's Spirit, yet he is not truly born of it, for if he were, he would not limit God's Holy Spirit to this or that ceremonial, circumstantial or shadowy thing; for that is to set the measure above him from whom it comes, and to measure that which God has left unmeasured, the hurt and mischief through all the Reformations that have been; this is not the Truth, but a likeness of it at best, which all hitherto have been deceived by, and 'tis our danger. O that it could be considered in our day!

But to the matter, that those that are truly left with the one Spirit of Truth, must and will agree, we grant; and therefore, where difference is carried on to the Breach of Charity, one side at least must be wrong; but which ought in God's fear to be inquired, the greater number cannot determine it; but that there must be an Identity of Opinion, as we think the School-men call it, that is a sameness of Mind, and oneness of Judgment to circumstantial, ceremonial or shadowy things, is sooner said than proved, and savours more of Curiosity than any real necessity.

And thus, what he seems fairly to grant in the fore-part of his Answer above, he takes away in the latter part, by limitting it to an Oneness of Mind, or Identity of Opinion, without making a difference betwixt circumstantial things, and such as are truly essential; for though all that fear God, must and will agree in the latter, yet there is no necessity that they must agree in the former; therefore, to insist too much upon such things, have always been of evil Consequence, making differences greater than else they would have been; and the reason is plain, for where such things are too much pressed, 'tis because they are over-valued, and by how much that such things are over-valued, 'tis the likeness, and not the truth that prevails; O that it could be considered! For by how much, as such things are over-valued, God and his Holy Spirit are neglected. Where this happens, such things that else might have been indifferent, becomes sinful to espouse, by such as truly fear God; for we may note, God and his Holy Spirit can never

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be over-valued in our Hearts and Minds, but every thing below him may.

And yet on the other hand, ſome ſeeing this as a certain wrong, the Enemy hath aggravated the matter to make both wrong, and that whilſt they both thought they was right; and thus the Devil hath deceived poor Man, even unto this day; and 'tis our danger, and will continue until the Spirit of the Son of God be more plentifully poured forth upon us that can ſay, *Father forgive them, they know not what they do*: This is that which we want, and ſhould truly wait for, that the great Deceiver, the occaſion of all ſtrife and trouble among ſuch as fear God, might be caſt out, that ſo he might deceive no more; which we hope is near; for there ſeems but one grand Remove to know the *Myſtery of Iniquity* finiſhed; and that is, to know our Habitation in God who we have profeſſed hath appeared in us by his Light and Spirit: Moſt look for this great *Myſtery of Iniquity* every where but where 'tis; they look for it abroad, when it can only be truly finiſhed in their own Hearts; for as he that never knew ſpiritual Bondage, can never know and value true ſpiritual Liberty; ſo he that never knew this great Myſtery of Deceit in his own Mind revealed, can never know a true delivering from it. 'Tis not poſſible to give a Rule by Words to eſcape it; for he that knows the moſt, and thinks by that Knowledge to eſcape being deceived, he is deceived already; we wiſh it could be ſeriouſly conſidered by all, for 'tis the greateſt Tryal Men can meet with. But to make leſſer things than eſſential things Terms of Communion, we have obſerved to be a great Evil in others, and ſhall we cry it up as good in our ſelves? That which we have affirmed was never bleſs'd and ſucceſsful in others, ſhall we put in practice? Unity has been the great Plea with which the World hath abounded; and whilſt they have ſought for it in ceremonial and ſhadowy things, inſtead of being united, they have been divided, and inſtead of being gathered, they have been ſcattered, not to the Honour of Chriſt, but the ſhame of Chriſtians; and ſhall we pipe to the ſame Tune for company, in which there ſeems no material Difference, but a change of the Perſons and Opinions? Have others been determining Truth by the majority of Voices, and do not we ſo too? And if we do, had we not better acknowledge it than let the matter prove it? (Obſerve) do not we ſet up the Body of our Community to determine the matter, and

what difference betwixt that and resolving matters of Faith by the majority of Voices? For is not the Body taken for the greater number, and then is it not the same thing when truly applied; and if this be true, is it not much worse in us, by how much we begun better? O that it could be considered! For otherwise we believe, at last it will not only be found wrong, but that 'tis but a few that manage this Mystery, in comparison to the greater number, though they may be supported by their compliance; but as we can truly say, *Father forgive them, they know not what they do*, we are not without hope; but seeing we have observed, that Christians and Christianity was always disadvantanged by those Pleas for Unity, when put in practice, of which we have had the Experience from others, and now have it among our selves, if we could heed to improve the occasion; and that is, to put in practice among our selves that good advice we have given to others, to wit, to make nothing Terms of Communion but essential things; to which purpose, that Book styled, *An Address to Protestants*, is so full to the matter, that if more can be said, no more need, if the Advice there, were but effectually taken by our selves, of which to be sure there's most need, that so at least, if we cannot mend others, we might prove the truth of our Advice by amending our selves; till then, those excellent Precepts want Examples, and all know they're more prevailing; therefore let us begin to set that great and glorious Example, which as yet the World never knew. We forbear to transcribe any part of the Book, considering it's great applause and late Writing; We hope it should not yet be forgotten. However, it may be reviewed to corroborate the Memory, and then there can want nothing that we know of but Self-application.

In the mean time, since 'tis matter of Fact, that Christians never thrived on a true Christian account, where those Pleas for Unity have been put in practice, relating to ceremonial, circumstantial, and shadowy things; do not object, that was only as carried on to violence; for we lay, the ground of all Evil is first in the Mind, and from a straitness there; and therefore, they that omit nothing of that power they have, who can believe, if such had more, they would imploy it better? Self-denial and Forbearance is the best demonstration of a Christian frame of Spirit; for Christ did not come to take away the greater Evils only, but the lesser also, yea, even the ground of all strife, that is Evil.

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Therefore let us alter our course, and take other but better measures; have Christians and Christianity, as truly such, almost been extinguished in the World, by seeking an Unity in Opinion? Let us seek it in Essentials, and then the work is done among us, at least, to peace, and then to be sure we shall promote, according to our power, what the World stands need of, as well as to wait, that a true Figure of the Universal Church, of which Christ is the true Head, may be advanced among our selves; and as this is truly set up and promoted, all difference dies that's evil, among such as truly fear God; then what remains, will be of no more Evil, than the various forms and colours of Flowers in Gardens, if not of much more service; that true Philosophers Stone, being known to turn all the Metals into pure Gold. Do we think we have been the most true that have been since the Apostacy, which perhaps we have, as to Notion and Profession of the things of God? Then let us endeavour to promote what is more true. What can hinder the putting this in practice, but the Devil, by the likeness of Truth, perswading this was to give liberty to Evil? And therefore, to prevent that they set up their own Works, whereby instead of leaving People to come in at the right Door, they do but make them formal. We must confess this cannot be fully known till God discover it, and therefore we must wait in Patience for God's time; but 'tis a mistake to think, this is to give liberty to Evil, while our end, we are sure, bears witness to the contrary. But to answer all the Objections that may be made, as it would take up now too much time, so perhaps we may not know all that may be advanced; so we shall omit that till we are better informed of them, as also, till more fitting Opportunity do occur. In the mean time, we desire those things may be taken in the best sense, but if otherwise, we hope we shall not altogether be unprovided.

We know 'tis writ, *They shall come from the West, North, East and South, to sit down with* Abraham, Isaac *and* Jacob *in the Kingdom*; Those certainly was not of one external Form and Order, as to ceremonial and shadowy things, yet we find they agree; but perhaps some will say, this is in Heaven; well, what then? Must they not agree on Earth, that must agree in Heaven? Shall not God's Will be done on Earth, as 'tis in Heaven? How else shall the Governments of this World become the Kingdom of Christ, but as the Peace of the one becomes the Peace of the other, and as the Go-

vernment of that, becomes the Government of this? For is not Christ the Head of all that is good, from the least breathing to the fullest perfection? And doth not he own all that's of his own begetting, every where, according to the degree of Knowledge revealed? Can any thing that's good in a spiritual sense be received, but as it comes down from above? And as Christ owns all that is good, shall not we own it? Doth not he gather all the good together in one, even himself? Doth he gather all universally in every Nation that fears him, and work Righteousness without respect to shadowy things, *&c.* wherein they may differ, for those he hath left unmeasured on purpose that they might not hinder? Doth he do this in every Nation, and shall not he do it in one Nation? Doth he do this in general, and shall he not do it in a Family? Yes, surely he will in his own appointed time. 'Tis true, he proceeds by weight and measure, nor can we hasten his Work, yet certainly we may wait for it in a true Christian Moderation and Patience, desiring the Lord Jesus may come, and if he please, quickly to gather the Minds and Spirits of all that fear him in any measure, into his Name, that is but one; then would *Sion* become our Solemnity, and *Jerusalem* a City sought out, and not forsaken, even the Praise of the whole Earth, not that which is below, for she is in Bondage with her Children; but that which is from above, the Mother of all, that is born free, which is not of Man's Contrivance, Work, or Workmanship; for she comes down from above, ready prepared of God, for all that is fit to enter therein; Man's Work ceaseth here; for he can add nothing to her Beauty and Perfection; *Martha*'s over Carefulness ends here, and *Mary*'s better part is enjoyed, that can never be taken away; and as Man's over-carefulness is over here, so fear is at an end; for as there is no Night here, so her Gates stand open by Day, for the good to enter therein, whilst that which is not good, cannot. The true Church is here indeed, but not yet referable to any Society, with respect to outward Rules, and therefore ought to be waited for by all.

Again, he tells us Page 4. *To plead being left to the Grace of God against Unity, is to abuse the very Plea,* &c.

Answer, The drift of this Argument is like the rest, to gain a presumptive dependance upon Men, either for their greater number, or for some external consideration or other, without true regard to Conviction or Perswasion; 'tis true, to plead this against

gainſt our Underſtanding is an abuſe of the Plea, and is little better than Hereſie, but none can be an Heretick that truly fears God; therefore, to plead this againſt this or that thing, brought in by this or that Man, or by this or that Aſſembly, that we believe is wrong, is ſo far from abuſing the Plea, that it may be a true uſing of it; therefore, before the Plea is proved abuſed, he muſt prove the things brought in, to concern the Eſſence of true Religion, or thoſe that bring them in, to be infallible, that ſo we may have ſomething that is certain to depend on; for as that is a-wanting, Truth is to ſeek till this be done; he doth nothing but beg the Queſtion, we are ſatisfied, and that he knows it.

Page the 4th. he ſaith, *I muſt ſay unto thee Friend, what if thou wilt not be left unto the Grace and Spirit of God in thy ſelf?* &c.

Anſw. We anſwer readily, then ſuch do the thing that is extreamly evil; but on the other hand, what if they are left with the Grace and Spirit of God, which they may, or at leaſt ſome, for any thing that he hath ſaid? What Care has he taken? What Remedy has he provided, that true liberty and freedom of Speech may be maintained? Not a word of that, which as it ſhews he has not aſſerted the Truth, for that has no reſpect to Perſons, but allows equal liberty to all, ſo it diſcovers him partially devoted in this buſineſs: He cannot but know equal liberty is abſolutely neceſſary in Truths Government, as alſo, the want of it hath ruined moſt of Chriſtian Societies before us; and as we have heretofore impeached the Building of others as not good, where that was a-wanting, allowing it at that time as a main Pillar of our Building, if diſcontinued, our Building that was true, will not only fall down, but then what is ſet up, will be worſe than what has been before us, by how much we did begin better.

Again in the ſame Page, he asketh, *If he may not exhort to the practice of what he is moved to preſs to the practice of*, &c. If not, he ſaith, *Thou art the Impoſer, by reſtraining me from my Chriſtian liberty, and not only ſo, but away goeth Preaching, and with it, the Scripture, that are both appointed of God for Exhortation, Reproof and Inſtruction.*

Anſwer, We are as much for ſaving of the Scripture as he is, and for ſaving of all that is good; therefore we grant, he may exhort to what he believes he is moved to preſs to the practice of; and

and thus having agreed with him to ſave true liberty, and all that is good, we hope he will accord with us, to ſhut all out that is not good; therefore we ſay, though we have granted this liberty as above, it's not our Duty to obey him, becauſe he ſays it, but becauſe we know, or at leaſt are perſwaded, that what he ſays is true; for he may be miſtaken and moved to what is wrong, as well as to what is right, for any thing that we know; and the ſame that may be ſaid to him, is true to every one, and all Men in the things of God.

Again in the ſame Page he Queſtions, *But are there not various Meaſures, diverſities of Gifts, and ſeveral Offices in the Body?* To this he anſwers, *Yea*; and then queſtions, *But therefore, are not the Members of one Mind and Judgment in common and univerſal Matters, relating to the Church of God?*

Anſwer, There is not much doubt in this when truly underſtood, but we are to mind that we be not deceived and impoſed upon, as to what is, or ought to be accounted common and univerſal Matters: By common and univerſal Matters, we underſtand, and we hope according to Truth, that is what has been commonly and univerſally received, and not new and novel things that have not been ſo received; for all new things that have not been ſo received, they muſt ſtay that bring them in, whatever they are, till they come in as the former did, to wit, by Conviction, or at leaſt by Perſwaſion, before they can be truly ſaid to be common and univerſal Matters; and in the mean time obſerve, this of Conviction and Perſwaſion preceding Conformity, hath been a common and univerſal matter or thing, becauſe commonly and univerſally received among us as a great Truth, we believing no true Building could be, or ſtand without it; therefore, let us mind we leave not common and univerſal Matter, and old Truths too, for new Notions; for if we muſt receive new things for common and univerſal Matters, becauſe ſome that bring them in, call them ſo, would have them ſo, or at beſt, believe they ſhould be ſo, we do not only go from this old received Truth, Conviction and Perſwaſion, the main Pillar of every true Building, but then, what is it that may not be obtruded? This would bring us to reſt upon Opinion, and what is uncertain, then what is more contrary to Truth, and the whole tendency of his Diſcourſe ſeems to this purpoſe, on which account many excellent Truths are miſ-applied.

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Page the 5th. he tells us, *What comes from the Light, Life and Spirit, in one, is the same in Truth and Unity to the rest, as if it rose in themselves; this is seen,* he saith, *in our Assemblies every day,* &c.

Answer, The Design of this Argument is to gain a dependance upon the teachings of God, by Instruments, equal at least to the teaching of God, immediately by his Spirit, in our own Hearts; but how plausible soever this is, 'tis not according to the Truth, as 'tis in Jesus; for though there is no contrariety in the Spirit of God, so no contradiction in the Spirit teaching, being all for one and the same end, to wit, the good of Man, by the Salvation of his Soul; yet betwixt God's teaching by Instruments, and teaching immediately by his Spirit in our own Hearts, there is this distinction or difference, that the first is but to prepare the latter to perfect; and as the latter is the highest Administration, the Leader being only here, that cannot be removed into a Corner; so he is in that Administration, the substance of all Types, Figures and Shadows, and the fulfiller of every Addition for Righteousness sake, to them that truly believe in him; therefore, in a Holy Reverence to the Divine Being, we say, the teaching of God by his Spirit immediately in our own Hearts, must have the preference, if ever we be truly perfected; and yet there is so much Truth in what our Author hath said, that when fairly stated, we are content it should be as a Rule to measure the whole Difference by.

And therefore we offer, either all that do speak in our Assemblies or Meetings, speak from the Light, Life and Spirit, or all do not, if all do so speak, set it out fairly and prove it, that we may be satisfied, but if all do not so speak, which we take for granted, then you must give us a certain rule to know who do so speak and who do not, or otherwise you must leave us to receive or refuse, according to the best of our understanding: Observe, we say, you must either give us a rule as above, or you must leave us free, for there doth not appear any mean betwixt those two that can be certain. To make the matter short, we take it for granted, that you can give no such Rule, therefore we conclude, we are left free in those things of God, which when they do come from God's holy Spirit immediately, there is no greater Authority, for are then as the Oracles of God.

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'Tis true, all ſhould ſpeak thus, but all do not, there's the doubt; and the like doubt is every where, where the Truth is concerned, if not, give us an infallible Rule to know, that the Church as referred to this or that Aſſembly, is infallible; this is abſolutely neceſſary if we muſt not act according to our Underſtanding; for no leſs than what is infallible, can keep in the Truth. We take it for granted, that you can give no ſuch Rule, and therefore conclude, we are every where free where the Truth is concerned, to act according to the beſt of our Underſtanding, in the fear of God; for the Truth is but one in all, 'tis not more, becauſe many ſay it, nor leſs, becauſe one ſays it; therefore we are as much bound to receive the Truth from one, as from many, and no more to regard many, than one in this caſe; wherefore it follows, as we are not bound to receive from one Man, what he ſaith is Truth, when it agrees not with our Underſtanding, we are not to receive it from many; for it muſt agree with the Underſtanding, or unto ſuch as receives it, it cannot be Truth.

Again, Truth is to be received for its own value, and not for the value of thoſe that bring it in; for if it were, we were in equal hazard to miſs it on both hands, on the one by an over-value of Perſons, or elſe, how could the Leaders of the People have cauſed to have err'd as they have done? And on the other, by an undervaluing, when God chuſeth the *fooliſh Things of this World to confound the wiſe*, as he often doth; and what is this for, but that *no Fleſh ſhould glory in his Preſence*? Therefore upon this foot, as above, we conclude, that Conviction, or at leaſt Perſwaſion, muſt be freely allowed to preceed Conformity, as well to keep down that over Greatneſs and Dominion, poor Man by the Enemy's ſubtilty is ſubject to aſpire at, as alſo, to keep every one in mind, that they muſt know the Truth for themſelves, for others can never know it for them; nay, to ſpeak plainly and properly, Truth can only be received for its own value, or it can never be received; ſo that we may ſafely conclude, where Conviction and Perſwaſion are diſallowed, that Government ceaſeth to be true, and is ſo far from being the Government of Truth, as that it wants the likeneſs of it.

Page the 6th. he ſaith, *They that walk in the Light, have Fellowſhip one with another*, 1 John 1. whence he ſaith, *'Tis eaſie to conclude, that thoſe that go out of Fellowſhip, go out of the Light*, &c.

Anſwer, Every ſaying or Poſition hath only one other ſaying or Poſition that ſtands againſt it, if therefore what is brought as the Antitheſis, differ from the direct oppoſite ſenſe, the Work that follows, or what is builded upon it, cannot be true.

Now this Poſition, that they that go out of Fellowſhip go out of the Light, he brings as the true Antitheſis to this Poſition of Scripture, quoted 1 *John* 1. or he doth not ſo bring it; if he doth not bring it as true, he deceivs or abuſes his Reader, but if he do bring it as the true Antitheſis, he is miſtaken; for this is not that true Poſition that ſtands againſt this Scripture; for if it was, then what ſtands againſt this Poſition, would directly be that Scripture, at leaſt in a true ſenſe; for oppoſites remain as fixt in their ſenſe, as the Eaſt doth from the Weſt.

Therefore, we need go no farther for a Proof of the Truth of the Work, than to take that Poſition that ſtands againſt his; for if it be that Scripture, in a true ſenſe, the work is true, but if it prove another thing, then may we ſee the cunning that is in daubing, as well as ſomething of that ground of the falſe reaſoning, that is among the Children of Men.

To try the matter, his Poſition is, that they that go out of Fellowſhip go out of the Light. Now that ſaying that ſtands againſt this, muſt be, that they that keep in Fellowſhip, abide in the Light; this is not that Scripture, 1 *John* 1. but another thing, differing materially from it; that Scripture is, *If we walk in the Light, as God is in the Light, then have we Fellowſhip one with another, and the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt his Son, cleanſeth us from all Sin.* Here the ground and cauſe of true Fellowſhip is a walking in the Light, and the proof that the work is true, is the witneſs in a Man's own mind, by the cleanſing from all ſin without this Fellowſhip is ineffectual; but where this is, ſuch is ſafe, let what will come; and as this is the beginning and ground of Fellowſhip with God, 'tis the ground of Fellowſhip with thoſe that is born of God; but his Poſition, that thoſe that go out of Fellowſhip, go out of the Light, make Fellowſhip with Men (for ſo it muſt be underſtood at laſt, or 'tis un-intelligible) to be the ground of

Fellowship with God, or of walking in the Light, as God is in the Light, which is the same thing; and as for the Proof that the work is true, to wit, the cleansing from all sin, not a word of that, should the witness in a Man's self been spoken on, or referred too, all his work had been to no purpose, grant that, and no hopes of conforming before Conviction; from hence 'tis plain, 'tis Form, and not Power and Life, that is so strenuously endeavoured to be set up.

But the sense and consequence of his Argument sets Fellowship up instead of Truth; for we can find no difference by his Argument, betwixt saying, *They that go out of the Truth, go out of the Light, and they that go out of Fellowship, go out of the Light*; but as the word *Fellowship* is set up for Truth, we must inquire what must be understood by it; for it cannot stand of it self. Therefore to make it intelligible in the best sense, we must joyn to it what he calls the Church, and then that Church must relate to People, and at last we judge, it must relate to those Orders, Rules and Forms, that are set up by this Church; for the difference begun there, and therefore the Fellowship seems to stand there: and then according to the Consequence of his reasoning, in our Judgment, his Position must be read thus, or to this effect; *They that go out of Fellowship with this Church, in these circumstantial or ceremonial things, which she set up to be observed, they go out of the Light that God dwells in.* Now, if this be true, the contrary Position is as true; *That they that walk in Fellowship with this Church, in the things she sets up to be observed, they abide in the Light that God dwells in.*

Upon the whole, 'tis necessary to know, whether all this be true or nay; if not necessary, a bare Conformity will serve, and they that can believe this Doctrin, have no more to do but to mind to keep in Fellowship with this Church, in the things she set up to be observed; and what may confirm such in it, is his Position, *That they that go out of Fellowship, go out of the Light*; for if this be certain, the contrary is as certain, *That they that keep in Fellowship abide in the Light*; but if needful to know the truth of those things beyond a bare Conformity, Belief or Report, as most sure it is; for if we must be led by this Church, and she be wrong, and that not known, our Damage is irreparable; but if she is right, 'tis as necessary to know that, as it was the other, otherwise we may

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be wrong, whilst he may be right. Now, whether he is right or wrong, can only be truly known by coming sincerely to the Spirit of Truth in our own Hearts, and there waiting to know what is right, and what is wrong; for that way only can we be gathered into the Truth, and kept out of what is wrong; therefore we must affirm, 'tis absolutely necessary for every one to come to the Spirit of Truth for themselves, for he that knoweth not the Truth in himself, can never know it in another as he ought to know it, nor can he value the Truth in another, that doth not first love and value it in himself; by which 'tis plain, 'tis God that adds to the true Church, and not Man, though we do not deny any means that God may make use of; but as they all direct to him, so they all end in him, for *Righteousness sake to them that truly believe.*

But to come to his Argument again, which is, that 'tis easie to conclude, *That those that go out of Fellowship go out of the Light*; to which we say, as easie as it is, 'tis not safe; so to conclude upon this Argument, the Word *Fellowship* being dubious and uncertain, as above, because those that did go out of Fellowship with the Apostles, did go out of the Light; therefore, those that go out of Fellowship, or differ with this or that Assembly, in this or that ceremonial or shadowy thing, go out of the Light, is no good Argument, being still but a begging of the Question; what is this but to over-value our selves, and bear witness of our selves as others before us have done, endeavouring to set our Foot by the Apostles, which we cannot? And if we could, the work would not follow God hath designed, which is to go forward; but instead of that, there would be a declining, seeing 'tis plain, as the Apostle and those then were most eminent, so there was a declining until the true Church did go into the Wilderness; nor can the work succeed better, whilst those that go before are to be relied on in the things of God, or whilst they look for it betwixt the Apostles time, and the Church going into the Wilderness; the inquiry was, what the Apostle did, thinking by doing what they did, to meet with the same Life and Power, or at least by doing such things to find acceptance with God; but when that was missed, and Life could not be found, nor Satisfaction in observing of outward things, then was the true Church allured by the Lord into the Wilderness state, wherein nothing could serve to satisfie the

Immortal Soul, but what came immediately from God, and then such God visited by his Holy Spirit, according to their state and his time, and so from step to step, till he came to us, to whom we believe he hath appeared more clearly than to any since the Apostacy; and as we have seen that Christ must be the beloved of the Soul, before we could by his Holy Spirit be led out of the Wilderness, so it must be a true dependance upon him that can only perfect that Work begun, according to his own will; and as we believe there is to be no end of the increase of his Government now begun, we are to consider there is some alteration in the work; it then decreased, it must now increase, and if it must increase, we may well consider, as God is Infinite and Eternal, he hath still more Wisdom, Power, and Glory to reveal; and as we think of this, and consider that we are but come to the beginning of this glorious Day, we should be so far from thinking our selves the greatest, as we should think our selves the least; for this only fits Men to know more, this is that which makes the Elders low and little in their own eyes, and then always ready to throw down their Crowns at the feet of Jesus, let him appear when, how, and where he pleases. Thus there must be a looking forward, and not backward for the mind of Christ.

This hath yet never been truly known in any Reformation; for instead of waiting truly upon him that stired in their minds, and shewed them things that was true, and did appear to them in the use of outward things, whilst their mind was sincere to him, we say, instead of waiting upon him to compleat and fulfil those Additions that might be serviceable for a time, they depended too much on outward Things, and limited him by those Forms that he had appeared in; and herein the Elders in every breaking forth of God since the Apostacy, have not been the least to blame, and the same Rocks or like them on which they were split, is our danger; wherefore, we should not think by what we know, to measure what is to come, or that the form that is now set up, is that which the People of God for the future are to be found in, for as that may, and certainly will make us miss of the appearance of the Lord that is still to come, so do we hereby limit the Holy one as much as is in our power, and such may as justly be reproved as they was of old, to whom the Lord said by his Prophet, *Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool; where is the House*

House that you will build for me, or where is the place of my Rest?

Page 6. he asketh, *If there be not a Christian Body, and whether this Body hath not a Head, and whether Christ be not this Head, and whether this Head be without Eyes, Ears, Smell and Taste, and this Body without Sense and Feeling; if not, whether this Head heareth, smelleth, seeth, tasteth differingly, and contrary to it self; and whether this Body hath a contrary feeling at the same time, about the same thing; and if it be true, that the Church of Christ redeemed by his most precious Blood, to live to him; see with the same Eye, hear with the same Ear, speak with the same Mouth, live by the same Breath, and are led by the same Spirit, where is this Disagreement, Contrariety, or dissent about the things of his Church?* We shall subjoin part of Page 8, and consider them together. *They that have Christ for their head, have one Counceller, they disagree not in their Judgments in things relating to Christ and good of his Church, they have one and the same guide,* &c. *Now to every Member is a Measure of the same Spirit given to profit with all, and though every Member is not an Eye, nor an Ear, nor a Mouth, yet every Member hath unity with the Eye, with the Ear, and with the Mouth, in their proper and respective Acts, and they one with another: The Eye sees for the Mouth, and the Mouth speaks for the Eye, and the Ear hears for both,* &c. *it must be granted, that there are helps in the Church as well as that there is a Church at all; and the holy Ghost has compared those helps to several Members and Senses of a Man's Body, as an Eye, an Hand, a Foot, Hearing, Smelling,* &c. *all then cannot be the Eye, neither can all be the Hand, for then they would confound their Offices; and if I will not comply with him that is made an Eye, because I am not that Eye, or an Hand, because I am not that Member my self, nor a Party to the Action or Performance of that Member, I resist the Lord, though under pretence of resisting Man for the Lord's Sake,* &c. with much more to the same purpose.

Answ. The most of all this is in the way of queries, but in short, something or nothing must be intended by them; if nothing, they're vain and to no purpose; if something, 'tis plain 'tis to gain a dependance upon what he calls the Church, and that he makes infallible as she relates to Men, that she must relate to Men is clear the difference being betwixt Men and Men, that he intends her infallible is also clear if he writes his Mind; for as he makes no provision in all his Book to the contrary, by allowing Conviction to preceed Conformity

formity to her Orders, ſo alſo he ſeems to make her immediately joyned to Chriſt for her Head, as the natural Body is joyned to the natural Head; to ſpeak a little to all this, which might be ſubjects of many and large Diſcourſes; firſt it doth not ſeem to hang well together; in the firſt part he tells us, this Church hears with the ſame Ear, ſees with the ſame Eye, and ſpeaks with the ſame Mouth; in the latter part, that Members of this Church, except he means another Church, are made an Ear, an Eye, a Hand, *&c.* as may be ſeen plainly above; is not this inconſiſtent? In the firſt they all ſeem to hear for themſelves, *&c.* in the latter, ſome hear immediately, and ſome ſecondarily; the firſt hear immediately, not only for themſelves, but for others alſo; the ſecond hear only for themſelves by others; is this to hear with the ſame Ear, ſee with the ſame Eye? we doubt not, but if it be, to ſay no more to this, we deſire it may be better explained.

In the mean time, as to the Church that is perfectly redeemed by the moſt precious Blood of Chriſt, to be *Bone of his Bone*, and *Fleſh of his Fleſh*, and ſo united to him as the natural Body is to the natural Head, we grant it may be ſaid in a good ſenſe, that ſhe ſees with the ſame Eye, *&c.* but this is that Church that is hid from the World, as Chriſt is hid from the World; yet he knows who are his, and they know him and his Voice. All ſhould travel for this, and not ſit down contented in any thing, till they know the white Stone where the new name is writ, that none can know ſo well as them that have it; and though the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, in this ſenſe is making her ſelf ready to do the Father's Will, yet we find not that this Church hath ſhewed her ſelf unto the World, or that ſhe may thus ſhew her ſelf we cannot determine; for her Life is hid with Chriſt in God, but if ſhe have or may be known by any infallible Character, that ſo what is, or may be ſaid of this Church, that is truly in God, in which there is neither ſpot nor wrinkle, may be truly applied to any viſible Society; let him then ſet her forth as a City on a Hill, that ſhe may not be hid, which he ought to do, if there muſt be that dependance which his Writings imply.

And then let us know, what Member is this Eye, that we muſt ſee by, and what Member is this Ear that we muſt hear by, and what Member is this Mouth that we muſt ſpeak by, in thoſe things that relate to Chriſt and his Church, that ſo we may not be impoſed

fed upon by ſuch as may pretend to be that Eye, that Ear and Mouth, and are not; for if this be the Ordinance of God, it both may, and ought to be done; for God yet never deſigned an end with reſpect to Man, but he diſcovered the means: Therefore let us have what is certain, or we cannot have Truth. Will he have us to depend, and not certainly tell us what on? He doth not intend that ſure, for that would be to bring in as great a Chimera on a Religious ſcore, as we have ever heard of, when this is conſidered; if this can be done that is inſiſted on above, let it be done, that ſo difference may come to an end; but if this cannot be done, then that we may be quiet, let all concerned conſider, there is that to be done they yet cannot do, that ſo in a ſenſe of our Nothingneſs and Inability, we may wait on him that's able to do all things; and in the mean time let us conſider, if it hath not been on this foot, that all before us ſince the Apoſtacy have miſcarried, haſting God's work, taking that to themſelves, God has not yet given to any viſible Society, if ſo we can only avoid that Rock by being more humble.

And therefore we deſire ſuch as do know what he means, and take themſelves of this Church, to conſider ſeriouſly in their own minds, if they find themſelves thus qualified to take the Government of Chriſt upon their Shoulders, that ſo others may certainly depend on them in the things of God, as infallible; and if they do not thus find it, then to conſider, if they certainly know who are thus qualified, on whom, not only themſelves, but others alſo may depend: But if this be not known, then whether they are ſtill to ſuppoſe, that there is ſome that are thus qualified, and on that Suppoſition preſumingly depend, ſeeing where there wants Certainty, there muſt want Truth. This we commend to every ones ſerious Conſideration, for the good of their own Immortal Souls, that they may not depend on Suppoſitions, Conjectures, or at beſt, but on Probabilities, but that all may be eſtabliſhed on God's everlaſting Truth, manifeſted in their own Souls, the Truth of all Shadows, and that which fulfils all Additions for Righteouſneſs ſake.

But again, what doth he drive at? What doth he intend by placing Infallibility upon this Church, as it relates to Men? To us, it muſt either be to ſet up the worſhip of God, or not, if not, we cannot find 'tis worth his while; for if God's worſhip may be known

known without their being ſet up, as infallible, there can be but little, if any thing at all in it; for where God's worſhip is truly known, ſuch muſt love God with all their Hearts, and who ſo loves God, cannot avoid loving his Neighbour as himſelf; and herein the whole Duty of Man ſeems included.

But if any think the worſhip of God cannot be ſet up, but as direction comes from Men, called a Church, and that becauſe nothing can ſet up the worſhip of God, but what is infallible, therefore we muſt accept the Church as infallible in this matter; then we enquire if this be not to have two infallible Rules for one and the ſame thing, for the Spirit of Truth is certainly one infallible Rule, and if this Church be another, then here's two; but as this is improper, ſo they cannot both ſtand together. However, we may diſtinguiſh the one from the other, the one is to be look'd for in the mind, the other from Men, called a Church without, and ſo the one is inward, the other outward, but taking this in the beſt ſenſe, not as meer Men, but as they think, Men indewed with God's Spirit, and thereby fitted for Government.

Now which of thoſe muſt give way, for both cannot ſtand in equal Authority together, will any venture to ſay, that the inward muſt give way, for a few, or the leſſer number cannot be ſo ſure as many, or the greater number, however, not as this Church that is ſet up as the Ground and Pillar of Truth, then we deſire ſuch to conſider, if they do not juſtle Chriſt out of his Throne, or at leaſt, ſet up a Tutor or Governour over the Spirit of Truth, as ſome before us have done, who begun well, and will ſtill in the general, in a good meaſure acknowledge, as we do to the Influences of God's holy Spirit; but then they tell us, the Scripture is the Rule, and what difference is there to tell us the Church is the Rule; the Heir while under Tutors and Governours, differing nothing from a Servant, though he be Lord of all. We would by no means miſs your meaning, either you take your ſelves as infallible in the matter, or not, if not, we ſay, why do you impoſe upon your Brethren? For if you're not infallible, certainly you muſt allow Conviction to preceed Conformity, but if you think your ſelves infallible, we tell you, notwithſtanding that you are to give way, for we hope all will conclude our Saviour perfect, and every way infallible, and as good, and as certain a Rule as any Church can be, while he was in that Body prepared for him; and if his Diſci-

Diſciples could not be made perfect, while he ſo abode with them, we hope no Church will take more to themſelves, or think they can do more than he did. Well then, if you will ſeek his Will, as he ſought or did the Father's Will, you muſt do as he did, you muſt tell your Diſciples or thoſe that depend upon you, that you muſt go away as a guide to them in the worſhip of God, and a holy Converſation, before they can be made perfect; for it is certainly as expedient for you to let all know, how far your Miniſtry can go, as it was for him; did he tell his Diſciples it was expedient for him to go away, or elſe the Comforter could not come, the Spirit of Truth, that only guide into all Truth? 'Tis as expedient, we are ſure for you, to let all know, that except Men come into their own minds, and there wait to know the work and teaching of God for themſelves, they can never be made perfect by your Miniſtry.

We would not have you miſtake us, do we hereby make void the gifts of God given unto Men for the work of the Miniſtry? No, by no means; but we would have all to know, that the beſt of gifts for this end, are but Additions, and are not to be perpetuated as for ever, for that which is but until, hath a limit, and ends in him that gave them; and as all ought to look for Chriſt the hope of Glory, to ariſe in their minds to fulfil every Addition, ſo ſhould all that have received any gift from God, direct all to him, in whom they all end, otherwiſe ſuch will be always learning, but can never know that Truth that maketh free; for though the light of a Candle is good, 'tis in the dark, 'tis in the Night, and they that uſe it are ſenſible of its ſervice, yet in in its uſe wait for the Day to come, for the Sun to ariſe, where its ſervice is ſwallowed up and truly fulfilled; even ſo the light that comes from Men, as it comes from God to them, is good and ſerviceable by way of direction, but its chief ſervice is to thoſe that are in the dark; and therefore, if the Son of Righteouſneſs be not waited for through the uſe of it, to riſe upon their Souls, they ſtill remain in the dark, notwithſtanding all the teaching of Men, let their Gifts and Abilities be what they will; therefore ſend all to Chriſt, and leave all with him, ſeek his Honour truly, and he will certainly ſeek yours, otherwiſe not.

He Quest. Page 6, and 7. *But the Members of Christ's Church in the Primitives, had different apprehension as the Apostle and the People gathered by them:* To this he answers, *Pray let me know who they were, and in what cases, the Person was* Paul *and* Peter, *and those Christians that differed about Meats?*

Answer, As to that difference betwixt *Paul* and *Peter*, we believe it was more the Author's own stating, than any bodies else, except some might bring it to beat down that over-value, which Men are ready to take to themselves, because of their Eldership or Priority, considering that here an elder Apostle was corrected by a younger, though the best of it is, he bore it well for any thing that we hear.

As to that of Meats, it is true, 'tis an instance of weakness, but that doth not conclude them weak that made the Objection, but rather strong, that was contented to be accounted weak rather than you should be unquiet; but whether weak or strong, seeing we are sure, there are some that is conscienciously dissatisfied, you ought to hear or forbear, and so avoid, or provide for the cure of Dissatisfaction and Division. But to that of Meats, he has unfairly avoided the weight of the Objection, by omitting days; 'tis true, he has an *&c.* but his Answer is as foreign to it, as if no such thing had been.

As to Meats he pleased to say, *It did not concern Church-Communion, but was private and personal Freedom, and entered here, as what I will eat, and when, as a Man having power over his own Appetite*; when 'tis plain from Scripture, they were not free, but bound on the account of Conscience; however, we hope he will not say they observed days too, under the same notion, but if he will, to make way for blind Obedience, who can help it? However, 'tis plain from *Rom.* 14. that the Church at *Rome*, or some eminently concerned therein, took things under another notion, tho' wrong too, as all have been since, that have made circumstantial things Terms of Communion, or how comes it that the Apostle bids them receive such? By which 'tis plain, either that such had been rejected, or could not be received on those Terms, so that the Objection if fairly stated, is valid; and thus far to the case in hand, as to prove various Practices in such things, tollerated by an Apostle, though contrary to a Churches mind, or some eminently concerned therein, and if various Practices then in Circum-

cumſtantials, why not now? To ſay thoſe then did not concern Church-Communion, but thoſe now do, is to make the Church now, or ſome eminently concerned therein, the Author of Schiſm or Diſſatisfaction, as ſhe or they was then, the only difference that we can find, they could not then be admitted, becauſe they ſtuck too much to Circumſtantials; and now ſome are thruſt out or rejected, becauſe they cannot receive ſuch like things.

But that we may accept of thoſe things in queſtion, whatever they are, he tells us, *They are not Jewiſh Rites*; doth it therefore follow, they are no Rites, or becauſe not Jewiſh Rites, they ought to be accepted as Chriſtian Rites? But further, as he tells us they are not *Jewiſh* Rites, ſo he tells us, nor ſhadowy Ceremonies; doth he mean they are no ſhadowy Ceremonies, becauſe not Jewiſh, or becauſe in Chriſt's Government at laſt there is none? Therefore he would not have thoſe received as ſuch, but if not ſhadowy Ceremonies, pray let us know what they are.

For if not ceremonial or circumſtantial, they muſt be eſſential, and if not ſhadowy, they muſt be ſubſtance; cannot Men be true Chriſtians without them, or cannot Mens Lives and Converſations be ſuch as adorn the Goſpel, if they want them? If not, we muſt confeſs, they are eſſential, otherwiſe they are but ceremonial or circumſtantial when all is done.

Again, will thoſe things he ſpeaks of lead into all Truth, thoſe that obſerve them, or at beſt, but into ſome things that is true? If into all Truth, then we muſt acknowledge they're ſubſtance, but if but into ſome things that is true, they're but ſhadowy: We find the great hurt and miſchief among Chriſtians is a miſtake, conceiving becauſe Chriſt came to end the ſhadowy ceremonies of the firſt Covenant to the *Jews*, therefore as there ſhould be none in Chriſt's Government, ſo there is none, and ſo under this miſtake, contend for ſuch Rules and Forms as they have, not as ſhadows, but as eſſential things; while the contrary is plain, for the beſt of outward Means, Rules and Forms, as they direct unto God's worſhip, and unto Communion and Fellowſhip with him, are but ſhadows; for they muſt be ſubſtance or ſhadow as above; if ſubſtance, they lead into all Truth, if ſhadows, but into ſome things that is true. The ſubſtance is God's Holy Spirit, that only and alone guides into all Truth, the outward rule, the ſhadow; in Chriſt there is no ſhadow, and therefore all that are in him,

though they may do the same thing the shadow leads to, yet they do it not by an outward Rule, but by his immediate Government; they do it naturally by participating of the Divine Nature, Christ being truly, not only the object of their mind, but the whole Government of the Mind and Soul is immediately upon his Shoulder, one Spirit with him, by being joyned to him, where every Addition is fulfilled for Righteousnes sake; but such as are under the shadow, though Christ be their end, yet the shadow is the object of their Mind, thinking to find Christ in this or that Duty, or serve him in this or that thing; and though every thing that is observed for a good end, is serviceable, if that end be looked for through the use of the outward things, but if a sitting down in the outward Court, then it will not only be a shadow, but become a vail and a snare, as well as the abuse of *Moses* Law did unto the *Jews*.

Page the 9th. he saith, *'Tis true, the People of God ought to be left to the guidance of the Spirit of God in themselves*, &c.

Answ. This is as fair as a Man can say, but hitherto through-out his Book, what he gives with one Hand, he takes away with the other; for he proceeds and says, *For this to be so applied, as to disregard the Preachings and Writings of Christ's inlightned Servants, because by them properly applied to the Preaching and Writing of false Prophets and Seducers, will by no means follow.*

Answer. We are of his mind in this, and do say so too; but this is but a beging of the Question, who are those Servants, and what are those Writings that are true, that are rejected? We grant readily, to apply this, and such like sayings as this, *That I must mind the Spirit of God in my self*, &c. only because others have applied them, or against such as we believe are Christ's inlightned Servants in the things that we believe they are inlightned in, or to apply them to avoid the Cross of Christ in our selves, is extreamly evil; but to apply them against what we believe is wrong, and imposed, let who will be concerned, may be a true Application; for the like cause will have the like effect, where-ever it appears.

But he proceeds, and saith, *the Doctrin is true, but not exclusively of all External Counsel*, &c. We say so too, for we are for agreeing with him as far as we can; and therefore, that we may continue, we must mind him, there is a vast difference betwixt excluding all

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External Counsel, and receiving all for Counsel, that comes from this or that Man, or from this or that Assembly; and we are sure we cannot find that he makes any good provision in his Book to the contrary, by allowing Conviction to preceed Conformity; but he saith, such sayings as this, that *I must mind the Spirit of God in my self*, &c. *are false in Application, where Men are allowed (observe) to have had the fear of God, and mind of his Spirit, and are not proved to have acted in their own Wills*, &c.

Answer, We did concur above as far as we could, but now we must dissent; it is not therefore false in Application, for that were to say, because some have had the fear of God and mind of his Spirit, therefore such have it now, or always. Again, because some are not proved to have acted in their own wills, therefore such have acted in the will of God, and therefore we must depend on such at all times, in what they direct, because we believed that once they was right. O sad Argument! How is it possible that we should believe his cause good, when we are sure those are unsound Arguments; and are also certain, the Truth stands in no need of what is untrue to defend it, much less can make use of what is false, nay, that belong to what is wrong, or at best to what is but like Truth; and to this purpose is the whole Page, nay the whole Book; for instead of proving things, he takes for granted, that this Church must be right, and all she differs with must be wrong; but the mischief is, we know not certainly what he means by this Church, and therefore desires she may be set forth fairly; and in the mean time we believe, he can no more prove her infallible as directed to Men, than he can make this Argument good, that because some had the fear of God as above, therefore such have it now; wherein there is no Evidence, no Certainty to depend on; for such may have had the fear of God, and mind of his Spirit, and for all that, may now be without it as well as himself, who used to have good Arguments, but now wants them.

Again, every Fact must be committed before proved, therefore they may have acted in their own will, and not yet fully proved; but what proof would he have, and we will endeavour to provide; in the mean time, can any indifferent Man think that all this Smoak can be without Fire? What, one part all right, and t'other all wrong; let them think so that can, we cannot, and not only

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so, but if we have allowed any to have had the fear of God, and mind of his Spirit in things offered to us, if that allowance was true, (observe) it was because we had a divine sense, relish, and taste of it in our own Hearts; was not this all the true Evidence we had, or could have, that such was right? And are we to go any further for a proof, that such are wrong, then when the same Evidence comes not along with them? Nay, instead of that Evidence, what we have is either against the things, or manner of bringing them in, must not we stand or fall here, or otherwise put our own Eyes out on purpose to be led and guided by others, and that before we are either perswaded, that their sight is good, or deputed to lead us?

Page 11. he saith, *The Enemy is at work to scatter the mind of Friends, by those loose Pleas as leave me to my freedom, and to the Grace of God in my self*, &c. For he saith, *The plain Consequence is to go from ancient Principles and Practices, as there set down, and to set measure against measure*, as in Page 12. which he saith, *is Confusion it self*, Babel *indeed*; *this is the very Rock*, he saith, *both Professor and Prophane would long since have run us upon*; *that a way is hereby opened to all the World, Libertines to plead the light within, for their Excesses*, &c. which he saith, *grieveth God's Spirit, and was severely reproved by our Friends in the beginning, and is still reproved by them that keep their Habitation*, &c.

Answer. The ground of this great noise and clamour, was not a going from ancient Principles or Practices, but your bringing in new things, and pressing them to dissatisfaction, against which it was alledged by those dissatisfied, as the Spirit of Truth was not only allowed, but was truly the only guide into all Truth, they ought to be left to the Grace of God in this matter, and not pressed to receive circumstantial or shadowy things, contrary to their freedom and satisfaction; here such pleaded Conscience against Imposition. Now, will you for this, criminate such with going into what is evil or immoral, or at least with designing such things; is not this to judge before the time? What's this, but first to suspect your Brethren of evil, and then kill them in a sense, to prevent it, a practice always judged by us in others, as evil and unrighteous, and therefore every appearance of it ought to be avoided in our selves; do such, or did they meet together? And then as a Church, agree what Rules should be observed by you, and might

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not they do that as well as you? For if Church Authority may be pleaded in the case, a few may be a Church as well as many; for 'tis not the greatness of the number in a Scripture sense, but the qualifications of the Persons that makes a true Church.

But if nothing that is simply evil or immoral, can be charged upon your Brethren, nor yet any excess in imposing new things upon you, will you to make way for Lordship and Dominion over your Brethren, joyn with the prophane, and Professors against them and the Truth, or at least, against those Testimonies to it? For when he tells us, *That this was the very Rock, Professors and Prophane would have run us upon, namely, that hereby a way was opened to all the Worlds Libertines, to plead the Light within for their excesses*; either he makes some Friends, among which is himself, to be one with Professors against the light within, or otherwise, doth not he joyn what is unequal together? For it is plain, that the Professors, tho' they owned the light within, and Spirit of God in a sense, yet they denied, it was a sufficient Rule to be relied upon, to guide into all Truth, and gave this for a reason, as it was an inward and hidden Rule, if allowed sufficient, as Independent to any outward Rule, then it opened a way for the Worlds Libertines to, plead the light within, for their excesses; and thus, though they owned the light within, and Spirit of God in a sense, yet they set up the Scriptures as superiour, and guide unto it, and do not you in effect the same thing? For though you do not set up the Scriptures, yet both by the management of things, and the tendency of our Author's discourse, you set up the Church as a Rule and Guide to the Spirit and Light within, and what difference is there, seeing both have equally been misapplied by the cunning, crafty reasonings of Men?

Now consider, is there any cause for all this noise, save your Brethren pleading the light within, against your forcing new things upon them? 'Tis true, he saith, *This Plea is a Deviation from the ancient Testimony*; but how doth he prove it? For forcing circumstantial, ceremonial or shadowy things, is of the same nature with the imposing of such like things by others; the difference of the the thing or Persons, do not alter the nature of Imposition. Imposition is Imposition still, so that if you impose, it will be the same thing; and you must either impose or not; if you deny that you impose, why are not you quiet? But if you own that you do

impose

impose, to us you justifie their Pleas against you; to be short, you must bring those things in, about which the difference is, either as Terms of Communion, or not; if you did not bring them in as Terms of Communion, then why do you criminate your Brethren as evil doers, whilst you have nothing against them, but refusing compliance with your Opinions? As this shews the want of Charity, so 'tis no proof that your cause is good; but as you bring them in as Terms of Communion, whilst they are no essential things, you must be wrong, whether the things be wrong or nay; for if brought in as Terms of Communion, whether right or wrong, they must be received.

Therefore, as the liberty of choice is taken away, our Understanding is superfluous; such service indeed may be blind or worse, but can never be reasonable: This appears as an excess in you, and as every excess is a wrong, for which you must plead the light within, or some other thing; if some other thing, pray let us know what it is; in the mean time, as this is a wrong, must it not be opposed by such as see it a wrong, by setting the measure of Understanding God has given, against this wrong, how else shall wrong now, or any for the future be redressed?

If this be what our Author terms Confusion, and setting measure against measure, are not you first in the matter, by administring the occasion, setting your measure not only against, but over your Brethren? For in the Truth, to us it doth not appear, but your Brethren have as much power to refuse things, as you can have to impose; and where the power is equal, the difference about Opinions in circumstantials ought to be discontinued by those that gave the occasion; for we are sure it is more according to Truth, for you, to omit the doing of what you may believe is good in this sense, than for others to receive what they believe is wrong; it will not be your calling them requisite things that can give you any Authority; for ceremonials or circumstantials, will still be such, when you have said and done what you can.

But if this be *Babel* indeed, a Term of his own starting, are not you the Master Work-men in this building, the cause for which the Language is divided? And then, is not there a plain parallel betwixt your work, and that in the Land of *Shinar*? They were there of one Language while they journyed, and till they began to build, their end was Preservation as well as yours; but as they

took

took their own Counsel, and not the Lord's, he divided their Language, not for their hurt, but that they might be stopped (which otherwise they would not) in that fruitless labour, that as it could never be perfected, so it could not answer the end designed.

And like to this, was not we of one language whilst we truly travelled for the true rest of the Soul, to wit, Union and Communion with God, in that holy Spirit of his Son Christ Jesus? But when we found *Shinar* a Plain, and took up our dwelling there in the likeness of Truth, then did not we, as others before us, begin to build, and bring in the Brick instead of the true Stone, and Slime instead of the true Mortar, proper Materials indeed for a great Building, and yet but the product of Man's reason? and though our end was Preservation, yet forasmuch as those Materials that makes this our Building, cannot regenerate the Soul, nor make the Mind holy, and as over-valued, hath stopped our Travel and Journeying, the Lord has looked down to behold our work, and because it cannot answer the end designed, and we would not be stopped, otherwise has he not as of old, and often since, divided our language, not for our hurt, but for our good, if we could but make the true use of it, which is to cease our Building, our Works, and so return to him that did begin to work in us by his holy Spirit; for he only can perfect it, and restore to us not only one language, but the pure language which can never be done any other way; for no hopes of doing it by our strength and work; for that caused the division, that way we may become a Sect, but can never be born of God's universal Spirit, where that one Original language is known, to which all that fear God must at last be gathered; till this is known, as there has been turnings and overturnings, on this account, so it must still continue till he come to rule, whose right it is: We wish in the love of God it could be truly weighed and considered, before it be too late.

And in the mean time, for you to call such Pleas as those, *leave me to the Grace of God, and to the Spirit of Truth loose Pleas together*, with several such like mentioned in his Book; we must say, we look upon it as of dangerous consequence; what though some may abuse them, will you take them away, and with them freedom of Speech? then you demolish those Fortifications that the Truth hath reared against Imposition, Innovation, and in some sort provided against an Apo-

ſtacy: This appears to us the fore-runner of a Retreat, as others before us have done, who begun with the Spirit, but after ſought to be made perfect by ſome outward way or thing.

For if ſuch Pleas and Teſtimonies of truth as theſe, *that nothing is a Duty but what we are perſwaded on, and that we ought to be left to the Grace of God*, becauſe the Spirit of Truth is the only guide into all Truth, be diſcouraged ſo early, and freedom of Speech taken away, what may we think the next Age may do, when we conſider, there was not yet any Chriſtian Society, but did at long run decline its Integrity, in which danger we ſeem as well as any that did go before us? And his own words to us, ſeems to import as much, for he brings the young convinced to be in moſt danger, and for whom thoſe requiſite things ſeems moſtly alledged to be ſerviceable, is this, becauſe the Truth grows old, that outward things are joyned with it to aſſiſt it, nay, ſure then it muſt be becauſe there ſeems a decreaſe; and if the young convinced ſeems in this great danger, whilſt the old are living, what muſt they do when they are gone beſide, if not an increaſe, there will be a decreaſe?

Well, ſince there is danger to go backward from the Truth, in the Mind and Love of God in the Heart, either into the World, or into Form without Power and Life, why ſhould not liberty of Speech be allowed to all, yea, to ſuch as think themſelves the Church? For if not ſuffered now, becauſe you think you are right, they will not be allowed when there is need, becauſe they are wrong, eſpecially having your early Example to plead; and thus may Truth's Teſtimony ſuffer in the future, by the cauſe which you now have given; wherefore we think, ſince you ſeem to make ſo much Poviſion for future time, you ought in this more eſpecially, to have ſet Poſterity a good Preſident by your Moderation and Forbearance, why may not you be cautioned to beware of Formality? We would gladly have a ſatisfying reaſon for this, while we conſider all before us have failed there, and what can you ſay more in our day, than others before us could in their time? Have you received more? then more is required. Have you any thing but what you have received? Muſt not the Root bear you, and not you the Root? Muſt particular Perſons by our own Rule be humble and low, and think others better than themſelves, and muſt not Churches as they relate to Aſſemblies, read in the ſame Book, for they are made of the ſame Men?

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Are they holier for being assembled, or because the greater number? then let them be more humble too. We believe it is as much the duty of Assemblies, as of Individuals; for at best you know but in part, and there is yet that to know, which you do not; and God is no more bound to many, than he is to one; as the Wind blows where it listeth, so may God speak or appear by whom he pleases: Pray let us know why Truth's Testimonies may not be allowed, and pass current, where the Life and Conversation is suitable; is it because you are the greater number, or because there is some among this greater number that is infallible, and then have received the whole Counsel of God, that nothing can be true but what such allow of, and all must be so that they approve? Not the first surely, for Truth never prospered in the World, while that was to be Truth, concluded by the greater number; besides, 'tis from hence that the Whore takes her power and strength, so that its not less than a scandal to speak of it, in the case; but if the latter, we must confess 'tis rare if true, because without President or Example; but on the contrary, that many have pretended as high things, and yet have been wrong, is no news, why then should not you fear, that while you think you stand, least you fall? For we believe you cannot make it appear, that any pretended such high things but they failed.

So that by all we can find, you seem in more danger than safety, and consequently more occasion to bear, if not receive those Testimonies, than reject them, under the notion of loose Pleas.

Perhaps you will say, that those that use those Pleas are wrong, and therefore the Testimonies are false and wrong, as used against you; but those that use them will tell you, that they really concern you, and that they are for your good to regard them, and indeed are so, for any thing that we can find that you have said or done; but if some have been wrong, must all be condemned for that? Will that make you right? We doubt not, but you say, they are wrong, if so, it must be manifest in their Lives and Conversation or not. If manifest in their Lives and Conversations, place your Judgment upon what is evil, and spare not, for there it will stand; for we plead not for evil in any, but for what is good; but let that which is true, live; you know where the Heart believeth to Righteousness, the Mouth must confess unto Salvation;

ſo where the Spirit of Truth is owned, and known the guide into all Truth, ſuch may truly hold forth thoſe Teſtimonies which belong unto it, yea, for thoſe Teſtimonies of Truth ought to live, as outward Monuments of it through all Generations. But if no evil manifeſt in their Converſation, nay, perhaps inſtead of finding any evil there, their Lives and Converſations may be as good as yours, and ſuch as adorns the Goſpel, againſt which Scripture ſaith, *there is no Law*; will you then make Laws againſt ſuch as God has made none? What will you do now? Will you ſay they are ſtill wrong, though you have nothing againſt their Lives and Converſations, nor yet againſt any principle or eſſential thing they hold, and that becauſe of that wrong, thoſe Teſtimonies of Truth which they uſe, are wrong and falſe?

For he ſaith Page 9. *That a ſaying may be falſe or true, according to the ſubject or matter it is applied too*; but that we believe is a miſtake; for we think Truth's Teſtimonies are not falſe, becauſe ſome may miſ-apply them. For inſtance, this Teſtimony that the Spirit of Truth is guide into all Truth, is always true, however miſ-applied, to illuſtrate it in lower things, as Meat, Drink and Cloathing, then what is more abuſed or miſ-applied; are they wrong or falſe, becauſe ſome abuſe them? No ſuch matter; no more do we think Truth's Teſtimonies falſe, becauſe ſome abuſe them.

Will you then abuſe and diſcourage thoſe Teſtimonies, becauſe you think thoſe are wrong that uſe them, though nothing that is immoral, or evil in it ſelf, can be proved againſt them? We think you cannot do this in the beſt ſenſe, but do evil that good may come of it; and though that may be a Maxim in a falſe Church, we believe 'tis none in a true; are they wrong ſtill in your thought? then 'tis what you cannot right without doing wrong your ſelves. Now, if you cannot right a thing without doing wrong, is it not your place to ſuffer? Nay, is it not your Duty? And if the advice to the Church of *Philadelphia* was thought on in this caſe, it might help to ſupport: However, we know our Saviour overcame by ſuffering, and muſt not all that's born of his Spirit, overcome by the ſame way, when they cannot do otherwiſe but do wrong? Otherwiſe do not you put forth your ſtrength, inſtead of waiting for God's, and that we believe will ſpoyl the work?

work? Doth Truth's Government seem to totter? What then? Is not the Government of truth God's? Cannot he establish it without your strength? Remember *Uzza* put forth his hand to stay the Ark when it seem'd in danger, he could plead his end good as well as yours, and yet he suffered for it; there may be an over-carefulness, as well as too little.

But might not a little Charity help all this, could you look upon such as trouble you to be conscientious, which we think you might safelier do, than make such Transgressors and evil-doers, for refusing circumstantial or shadowy things, while they own with you, that without Holiness no Man can serve the Lord; for how can this preach to them that are not of our Communion, while you give not unto your Brethren, what you desired to receive from others? This we think you might easily do, while you differ not in essentials; for as you differ not in essentials, there seems nothing but what might be dispensed with. Remember they obtrude nothing upon you, nor seems to stand for any other freedom but that wherein Christ has made them free; therefore, if you could esteem them, or any of them conscientious, the work would be easie. You know the Lord often spared those that are wrong, for the sakes of those that are right, and 'tis our Doctrin, Tares should be suffered to grow, rather than destroy Wheat; then how can your Government be like his, whilst that is wanting? Certainly, you cannot think that all is wrong that are dissatisfied with those new things brought in, at least, as made Terms of Communion. We would perswade you better if we could, by assuring that some are right by being sincere; could you but believe this, you would quickly find all that is lawful is not expedient. Here the work would be easie, nay, your duty too, to omit the pressing to dissatisfaction, some things that you might think good, whilst in themselves no essential things, rather than put your Brethren upon the receiving things that are not good, which all such things are that are not of Faith; you know who hath said it.

But if this difference cannot be ended, but that it must be like that of *Judah* and *Israel*, manage it with more Moderation, and in that love of God, that it may be shewed the Lord is at hand, to gather different apprehensions into a better temper, and thus in your difference, there might be true service by shewing the World

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that Christian Example, which as yet they never had, and do as much want, otherwise you will dishonour the God of Truth and Peace, before the People: It will not be the laying the blame one of another, that will do the business, you must agree together quietly, or part friendly, or you are no preachers of Righteousness, whatever your Principles of Truth may be: *Abraham*'s Family and *Lot*'s, could not agree together, but they agreed in their parting, nor did their separation lose their Friendship, as the Offices of love performed after, do manifest, at least, on *Abraham*'s part, who was the greater, more by his Self-denial and Meekness, than his Eldership; for he was content for quietness, with what the other left or refused.

But why cannot you agree together, whilst you own one and the same righteous Principle? You came out together, have you not done the greater, and cannot you do the less? That's strange; were it not worth your while seriously to consider, that the Lord may have a hand in the matter, than still either think of differing or dividing? Had not you need consider, that all before us that have come out through the stiring of God in their Mind to a Reformation, was not only tryed by such as was wrong, but also by such as was right? In the first, they stood, but in the latter have failed, and can we think to be made perfect without the full Trial, if you think that therein is your danger? O that this could be considered in that coolness, love and good will, that 'tis written in! For certainly this is our Trial.

But that we may come to an end, seeing there has been so much said by him of the Church, and power of the Church, we desire to know what is meant and intended by this word Church, for sometimes the whole Communion is taken for the Church, and sometimes every particular Society have the name of the Church; and therefore, because of those divers acceptations of the word Church, we desire to have it set forth fairly, what is intended by the word Church, with respect to the Controversie: In the mean time, we grant, that any may reprove evil, and what is immoral, in any of the same Society, we grant, that any Assembly that meets about the outward Affairs of the Community, may deal with such as go from Truth's Principles, or goeth into any thing that is immoral, or

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that layeth any other Foundation than Jesus Christ, and his holy Spirit, to be guide into all Truth. But forasmuch as the difference is not about any of those things, but about certain new things that have been brought in since our beginning; on this account we desire to be satisfied, where that power remains to bring new things in, and to make such things Terms of Communion; and to this end, we offer, either such things must have a value in themselves, or they must have a value set upon them by others.

If the first, they will speak for themselves without any unsound or untrue Argument to defend them, or force them forward; for those are so far from helping any good cause, as they really hurt it; for how should we believe that cause good, which we know not, but by those Arguments which we are sure is false, or at least not true?

But if the latter, then others must speak for them, and we must receive them, not because we know they are true and good by their own worth, but for the value of those that bring them in, which we think must be either some particular Persons, or else some Assembly: If the first, who, and where are they, and from whence does their Power and Authority grow? This can neither be peremptory nor impertinent; for if any such thing, we should know it; and every one that doth well, is willing to bring his deeds unto the Light; nor doth God lay an Office upon any, but he will support them in it. But if the latter, then it must be an Assembly of the whole Community, or some particular Assembly; not the first, because they cannot meet to consult, nor the particular meeting that our Author belongs too, nor that which we belong too, nor any of that Order; for then, as there is as many Churches as distinct Assemblies, there might be as many Opinions as Churches, their Power being all alike.

If then some distinct Assembly, it must be such an one, to speak modestly, as is superiour to all the rest, according to Constitution, and then what comes not in this way, can have no shadow of any Authority, for force or pressure of new things, beyond satisfaction and freedom; but such a Church cannot be, but either by a civil Compact, or by a divine Institution: The first is not agreeable with the Truth, for we cannot delegate, or give power to any to make Rules or Laws, to guide us, or oblige us in spiritual Matters, because

cauſe we cannot be bound by any thing but the Truth, and we muſt know it ſuch, before we can be bound by it; therefore no ſuch Compact or Agreement can be, becauſe liberty reſerved, and our power given away, are inconſiſtent. But if the latter, that ſome one Aſſembly, according to divine Inſtitution, is ſuperiour to all the reſt, who can make circumſtantial or ſhadowy things Terms of Communion? 'Tis neceſſary we ſhould know that Aſſembly as well alſo, that their Authority is divine, if we muſt reſt upon their Determinations without Trial in theſe matters, &c.

But this we think we cannot know but by a divine way, and that then muſt be either by a divine ſenſe in our own minds, or by the Authority of Truth, which ſuch bring to convince in both caſes; we conceive our Underſtanding is concerned in our Obedience and Duty, but neither of thoſe ways are known to us at preſent; therefore, till ſet forth to preſs Obedience under the notion of a divine Inſtitution, implies a kind of Contradiction, being in effect to ſay, we are to go out of the Truth to ſerve it; for to go into uncertainty, is not to ſerve the Truth, if it be not to go out of the Truth directly; thus by all our endeavour in ſearching into the matter, we cannot find according to the Principles of truth, that Conformity is to go before Conviction, however, not before Perſwaſion.

And yet we ſay for Peace ſake, and that nothing might be hindered that is good, as alſo that true liberty may be preſerved, any Particular or any Aſſembly of the Community, may offer what is new, if they ſincerely believe it good and ſerviceable, without breach of Unity, or at leaſt of Communion; but we cannot find to the bringing of new things in, as matters of Faith, or Terms of Communion, that any Aſſembly have any more power than a particular Perſon; and if miſtaken, we would very gladly be better informed; and therefore till that be done, we believe, to preſs new things, as matters of Faith, or Terms of Communion to diſſatisfaction, and indeavouring to get ſuch things ſtrengthened, by getting the majority of Voices, either directly or indirectly, is a going out of Truth to make Parties. And this being done, how eaſie is it for Men to be hurried into that Uncharity, as not to diſpence with thoſe Diſſenters, which themſelves have made, without Characters of Indignity, as publick marks of Diſ-favour, as though

though the thing was out of doubt Truth, becauſe the moſt are for it?

We ſhall endeavour to bring this long buſineſs to this ſhort iſſue, either ſuch as believe the Spirit of Truth is the only guide into all Truth, have liberty and freedom to judge of what they are to receive, or they have not; if they have not power and liberty to judge of what they are to receive and practice, as matters of Faith, *&c.* then the power over them is uncountable, and ſuch muſt ſubmit to their Determinations, not becauſe they know, or are perſwaded they are true, but becauſe thoſe that have this power over them, ſay they are true; if this be not Uſurpation, exerciſing Lordſhip and Dominion, as well as the bringing in blind Obedience, and the begetting into an Implicite Faith, we deſire it may be fairly demonſtrated to be according to Truth; this cannot fairly be denied, becauſe we believe the Truth will ſtand the Teſt, and be willing to come to the Tryal; we know that which is falſe, will not indeed, becauſe it cannot; therefore we are fully perſwaded, where any is offended at this fair and free Inquiry, for ſatisfaction, 'tis a ſign, if not an infallible one, that ſuch are faulty.

But on the other hand, if we have liberty and freedom to judge of what we are to receive and practice, as matter of Faith, or terms of Communion, that ſo our Religion and Duty, may be according to our Underſtanding and Judgment, then we may diſſent, as well as aſſent to things propoſed or brought in, according as things or occaſion may fall out, and this, without fear or hazard of being proclaimed Delinquents; for Nonconformity, not only with reſpect to our private Sentiments or Opinions, for that we might do in *Turky* or at *Rome*, but with reſpect to thoſe of the ſame Communion, that would bring new things in to be obſerved, otherwiſe we have neither true liberty nor freedom.

The Reſult is, if there be a power over us that can bring in new things, as matter of Faith and terms of Communion, let it be fairly ſet forth and proved, according to truth; but if we have power and liberty to judge of what we are to receive, then allow it freely that diſſatisfaction and difference may come to an end.

To this we think can be but one Objection, and that is, that ſuch as are diſſatisfied, are not conſcientious, which we confeſs is an old Objection, but yet not more old than evil, and never was to ſeek

to abuſe others, by ſuch as over-valued themſelves; 'tis time therefore it were removed, being as well unchriſtian, uncharitable, as unrighteous, to criminate Perſons before any thing that's evil or immoral can be juſtly proved againſt them; and ſuch practices have always been ſo far from making difference leſs, as they made them greater; for inſtead of reſtoring the Path of Peace and Truth to dwell in, they always laid a ſure foundation, both for diſſatisfaction, and at laſt for diviſion, ſeeing every one that is truly conſcientious, have not far to go for an unerring Evidence, to reverſe ſo erronious a Judgment.

Thoſe are ſome of thoſe many things that we are diſſatisfied with in his Book, and we can ſay on a conſcientious account, either then from a true Underſtanding, or from ſome miſapprehenſion of the matter; in both caſes, we conceive, we ſhould be relieved according to Truth. And as our Author is great in the Reputation of Men, we expect, and alſo hope, he will be great as a Chriſtian too, which is to ſubmit unto the Truth where-ever it appears concerned, by amending what is amiſs, whether it be with reſpect to himſelf, or it be in our miſ-underſtanding, ſo far as lieth in his power; and that he may proceed chearfully in this undertaking, we are content to ſay, we know but in part, and indeed, we think but in a little part too, nor dare we think our ſelves ſo perfect, but what we have writ, may be objected againſt, by ſuch as will cavil on divers accounts. Perhaps ſome may ſay, it wants Method; may be ſome may ſay, there's ſeeming Contradiction, or 'tis full of Tautologies; nay, perhaps ſome fault may be found as to the matter; for we confeſs and think, that the day will ſtill grow more clear, and then ſhadows will ſtill be leſs: However, as we are ſure our end is good, there can be nothing done againſt us in the ſame mind, that can hurt, or be of evil Conſequence; for varieties of Underſtanding, that ſtands in the fear of God, and are managed in his love, may be ſome cauſe that more light is afforded; but however, we make our advice to others, in the firſt place, a caution to our ſelves, to be always ready to hear and mind, what, when, and how the Lord is pleaſed to ſpeak or appear; for we do not already count our ſelves perfect; yet one thing we do, forget what is behind, and preſſes hard after the Mark that ſtands before,

and

and think those that do not so, seems not apt for the Kingdom of God; for the mind of Christ must be sought for forward, and not back to his former appearances; and thus in part we know what we are, but what we shall be, we do not fully know; but as the living hopes remain in the mind, such truly wait for his appearing, which as they cannot miss of his coming, so shall they see him, as he is, and be purified by him that is pure, for he was, is, and is to come.

Lastly, we must confess, we do believe our Author might be really troubled touching our Differences, as *Israel* was about *Ruben*, when he built his Altar; but we believe also, he did not inquire the matter out fully as they did, which if he had, we are fit to think, we should have found as few Objections in this Book, as in his other Writings; or had he considered of what, of this nature was, (as we were informed) communicated to him some time since, then perhaps had been no occasion for this; however, we hope, shall be always as ready to confess unto a Truth, as to oppose an Error.

In the mean time we conclude, truly desiring the good of Mankind in general, but especially of them that have in any measure believed, or confessed that the Spirit of Truth, or Light within, that comes from God, is the only guide into all Truth; for those we are the more concerned, not only because they are nearer to us by Profession, but also, because they have received more, and so have more to give an account of; therefore we do earnestly desire, such may not sit down in a Notion, or Profession of so holy a Principle, and thereby take the name of the Lord in vain, but by a true Travel in their own Hearts and Minds, with God's holy Spirit, may come to prove the Truth of what is professed, then will they be established as Mount *Sion* indeed, that never can be removed.

The END.